LANGUAGE, IDEOLOGY AND EDUCATION

Title of thesis : Language, ideology and education.

Number of volumes : one.

Author : Ian Frowe

Qualification submitted for : Ph.D.

Institution submitted to : University of Warwick.

Department : Philosophy.

Date of submission : September 1999.

CONTENTS

Summary of thesis

This thesis examines the relationship between language and social reality. The position argued for is one which sees language as having a constitutive role to play in the formation and maintenance of the social world. It elaborates and develops a view expressed by Quentin Skinner, namely, that language and the social world are mutually supportive and exist in a state of dynamic interaction. Because language has this constitutive role in relation to the social world attention to the use of language is important for the language we employ will be a significant factor in determining the nature of that world.

The notion of ideology is defined in a critical sense as 'malign decontestation', i.e., the presentation of that which is contestable as if there were only one legitimate perspective. The concepts of absolutism and universalisation are taken as key ideological markers. Given the constitutive role of language, the identification of ideological language becomes important because aspects of the social world which are informed by such a language will reflect the errors inherent in the linguistic structures themselves. One of the central arguments of the thesis is that ideological language often arises when insufficient attention is paid to the ontological differences between activities whose subject matter is the natural world and those whose subject matter is the social world.

There is a focus on educational issues because the impetus for this thesis arose out of a growing unease with the nature of the language used in relation to this topic. Although a concern with the language of education is not uncommon, the full significance of the language we use in this area is often unacknowledged because the necessary theoretical background is absent. It is the main purpose of this thesis to provide a philosophical justification for this concern.

CHAPTER ONE : IDEOLOGY

Introduction : definitions in search of a concept?

The term 'ideology' is still widely used in everyday language, particularly in politics where it fulfils a reasonably clear function, namely as a shorthand means of identifying certain sets of political beliefs and practices. Phrases such as 'the ideology of the Right' or 'socialist ideology' are convenient ways of packaging a set of beliefs on the assumption that most people will have a rough notion of what these beliefs are. (1) In its more scholarly manifestations however, 'ideology' is far more, or can be far more, than simply a useful abbreviation. At times there appear to be as many definitions of the term as there are theorists and the situation is further confounded by a tendency for writers to elide between (or even amongst) different formulations (Hamilton 1987 : 18). Eagleton identifies sixteen accounts of ideology and acknowledges that this may not be exhaustive (Eagleton 1991 : 1-2) whereas Hamilton locates no fewer than twenty-seven 'elements' which are able to be identified in the literature (Hamilton ibid.). One reason for this variety of definitions or formulations is a tension between the everyday use of the concept and the desire of theorists to provide a more sophisticated, technical account which identifies particular phenomena and can serve as a tool of critical analysis.

Thompson claims that all conceptions of ideology can be divided into two categories: the 'neutral' and the 'critical' (Thompson 1990 : 53). Neutral conceptions are those which offer an account of ideology without implying that there is anything misleading, illusory or unsatisfactory about the phenomena brought under the term. Critical conceptions are those which convey a negative or pejorative sense to ideology implying that to describe something as 'ideological' is to suggest that it is unsatisfactory from some point of view. Geuss offers a tripartite division which adds a 'positive' conception to Thompson's neutral and critical characterisations (Geuss 1981). Geuss' division allows for accounts of ideology which see it as beneficial, as something to be viewed in a positive light. I intend to adopt Geuss' classification as a preliminary framework for the discussion of ideology and will begin by sketching out the

three conceptions which he identifies, namely, the positive, the descriptive and the negative or critical.

The Positive Conception

This is the original conception locatable in the work of Destutt de Tracy who saw 'ideology' as the 'science of ideas', a study of beliefs which took Newton's physics as its inspiration. A true Enlightenment thinker, de Tracy believed that it was through the use of reason that 'real' knowledge and understanding were to be acquired and, as a consequence, dogma and superstition could be swept away resulting in liberated individuals who would then create a new world based on rational principles. Although toward the end of his life de Tracy lost faith in the power of reason to cure all social ills, his early notion of ideology was of a progressive, emancipating scientific study which would act as a foundation for the reconstruction of the self and society. Ideology for de Tracy was something desirable; it was needed in order that social and intellectual progress could be made and existing beliefs rationally evaluated. As Thompson remarks, for de Tracy, ideology was conceived to be '...positive, useful, and susceptible of rigorous exactitude' (Thompson op. cit. : 30). As with natural science there needs to be some material to study, some subject matter, which for natural science was the physical world and for ideology the current beliefs and practices of society. Ideology in this sense is a critical tool; it is a methodology, a kind of analysis which can 'go to work' on its material as a doctor may 'go to work' on a sick patient.

Ideology in the positive sense seeks to apply the 'science of ideas' to beliefs in order to generate a set of true beliefs which can then serve as the basis for human progress. As a consequence of this positive conception of ideology, it will be possible to identify those beliefs which are irrational or superstitious and thus eliminate them from human affairs. The methods needed to accomplish this process were to be found in the scientific work of Newton and others who had applied reason to their studies rather than accepting the established beliefs of their time simply on the grounds of institutional authority, common sense or folklore. For Newton, the identification of errors was a consequence of his scientific theories and, similarly for de Tracy, the identification of erroneous beliefs was a consequence of having

a positive theory regarding how well-founded beliefs were to be obtained. In this way de Tracy's positive conception of ideology also furnishes a negative conception for those beliefs which fall foul of the methodology of the 'science of ideas' will be rejected as ungrounded. Such beliefs would not be 'ideological' in the sense used by de Tracy but examples of superstition, ignorance or dogma.

This 'positive' sense of ideology advocated by de Tracy is very much in the spirit of other writers such as Condorcet who perceived reason as the key to human progress:

> The time will therefore come when the sun will shine only on free men who know no other master than their reason; when tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid or hypocritical instruments will exist only in the works of history and on the stage...and to learn how to recognise and so destroy, by force of reason, the first seeds of tyranny and superstition should they ever dare to reappear amongst us.
>
> (Condorcet in Bernstein 1991 : 34-35)

A different positive sense of ideology is also evident in Lenin who saw it as the scientific theory of socialism which, with the assistance of an intellectual vanguard, would enable the working class to throw off the yoke of oppression and restructure society in their interests. Ideology is thus seen as a liberating force essential for the creation of a just society. The role played by the intellectual vanguard is to supply an ideology for the proletariat; the intellectuals are *not* concerned to discover what beliefs the proletariat actually have but to provide a set of beliefs which will best serve their interests. A positive ideology in this sense is something created by a group to provide a plan or blueprint for social reconstruction. The assumption here is that what can be provided by an ideology in terms of beliefs, is preferable to those already existing in the minds of the populace: there is no virtue in simply facilitating the achievement of ends which are themselves the product of erroneous beliefs. There must therefore exist a mechanism for producing these superior beliefs and for Lenin, it was through the adoption of scientific socialism. The 'positive' character of an ideology may seem to

depend on which side of the fence you stand but from anything other than the most partisan perspective, the removal of dogma and superstition must represent desirable human goals.

For some commentators any positive conception of ideology is untenable because the concept always has a pejorative or negative meaning. Minogue, for example, identifies ideology with various forms of totalitarianism and claims that all ideology shares a hostility to what he calls modernity, that is, '...to liberalism in politics, individualism in moral practice and the market in economics. All such practices represent the triumph of anarchistic particularism which is, in ideological terms, the source of oppression' (Minogue 1985 : 4). As Duncan observes Minogue's position is representative of the view which sees ideologies as '...extreme and dangerous, even verging on the pathological' (Duncan 1987 : 657). However, both de Tracy's and Lenin's versions of ideology are positive in that they recommend, advocate the adoption of (an) ideology.

The Descriptive Conception

Ideology in the descriptive sense can be viewed as a sort of anthropological/sociological inventory of the beliefs and practices characteristic of a particular group or culture - indeed in this sense it may be almost synonymous with what is called 'culture.' Under this broad formulation it follows that all individuals will possess an ideology for all social groups will have beliefs of some sort and practices based on those beliefs. If we wished to be more discriminating we might section off those beliefs and practices which relate to important aspects of the groups' life e.g., religious, political or moral beliefs, that is, beliefs which may be thought to constitute a distinctive 'world view' and reserve the term 'ideology' for these only. Such beliefs would be central to a conceptual scheme, widely or strongly held, systematically connected, action guiding, etc.

It does not follow from this that there will be one set of beliefs and practices held by all members of a social group. Within groups there will be difference and diversity, conflict and consensus so that within any 'group' different ideologies may exist and the extent to which we identify these will depend upon the level of analysis we wish to furnish. Despite the problems of identification and interpretation which such an exercise might present, it makes sense to

speak of the world view of communism, Islam, Quakers or Aborigines. Ideology as a world view is therefore different from the (simple) descriptive conception of ideology as in the former not all beliefs will be relevant, only those of some significance will be included. It may also be the case that whereas all social groups will have an ideology in the simple descriptive mode some may lack anything which could be described as ideology in the sense of a world view.

Definitions of ideology as a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class or the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life convey a descriptive conception of ideology. This conception of ideology is evaluatively neutral; it neither advocates, recommends, criticises or condemns the beliefs examined. It attempts to explicate and understand beliefs from a detached vantage point with no judgements as to the value of the beliefs themselves: there is no praise or blame attached to 'having an ideology' in this sense. Unlike the positive conception advocated by Lenin, nothing is being created or invented which did not exist before; the beliefs are there to be found and analysed. Unlike de Tracy's or Lenin's conceptions ideology in the descriptive sense offers no evaluation of the beliefs studied.

The Negative or Critical Conception

As was indicated above, the purpose of this survey of different accounts of ideology is to identify a conception which possesses the rigour necessary for critical analysis. The negative conception of ideology sees it as something to be exposed and removed because its effects are, in various ways, detrimental to the full and free cultivation of human capacities. To describe a set of beliefs as 'ideological' in this sense is to evaluate them as undesirable, unsatisfactory or objectionable in some respect. This is a reversal of de Tracy's position for whereas de Tracy used the term ideology to describe the mechanism for finding true beliefs and, consequently, the identification of the false and erroneous, in the negative or critical conception of 'ideology' the word is applied *to* those false and erroneous beliefs.

It is in this negative guise that the majority of recent definitions of ideology are to be located but different formulations identify different areas of deficiency. For example, identifying

ideology with ideas which help to legitimate a dominant social power is to provide an account which concentrates on its political nature with the implication that the domination is in some way illegitimate. Definitions which refer to the confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality could be understood as providing an ontological argument regarding the existential status of certain aspects of experience. 'Systematically distorted communication', a phrase coined by Habermas (Habermas 1970), might be seen as raising epistemological questions regarding the objectivity or reliability of particular beliefs e.g., whether beliefs are correctly identified as to their warrantability in terms of evidence or argument. Ideology as 'semiotic closure' could be seen as indicating a procedural fault in the conduct of discourse whereby possible areas of inquiry are closed down rather than opened up. Whilst each of these accounts may be interesting and informative, it is important not to run them together for the effect will be to obscure the argument and run the risk of logomachy.

Ideology, in the negative or critical sense, involves error but it is not just simple error: ideology invokes the notion of 'systematic error', that is, error which arises not just through the committing of slips or simple mistakes but errors which are significant and stem from a fundamental misunderstanding of a situation. The errors are the inevitable outcome of working within a framework which contains a radical misconception. Such an error, it will be argued, is to be found in Marx's own work and consists in his failure to recognise the role played by language in the social world. This derives in part from Marx's desire to adopt a 'scientific' approach to the study of society. Because he was so impressed by the successes of scientific methods in other areas of inquiry, he sought to achieve similar results with these methods in a social setting. What he fails to recognise is that the natural and the social worlds are radically different with respect to the role played by language.

Marx sees language as essentially non-constitutive in relation to the social world, thus mirroring its relation to the physical world. In effect language is a problem for Marx because whilst he is cognisant of the social dimension of language, his wider theoretical perspective, particularly his views regarding the nature of consciousness and practice, make language difficult to successfully accommodate. His criticism of the idealists that they simply played with 'mere words' signals his failure to grasp the significance that words have.

The model of ideology I intend to adopt is rooted in the negative or critical conception: ideology will be characterised as something to be identified and removed. Although much writing on ideology focuses on political issues, the term has wider applications to other aspects of life. The claim of this thesis will be that 'ideology' can be understood as 'decontestation', that is, as the rendering of that which is debatable, contentious, arguable etc., as if it were the subject of widespread agreement. The mechanisms by which this may be achieved are various and some will be discussed in later chapters. This view derives initially from Freeden (Freeden : 1996) but the theoretical background I develop is very different from his, in particular I distinguish between 'benign' and 'malign' decontestation, reserving the term 'ideology' for the latter only. Given my particular interest in education, there are many references to educational issues although the general position developed has implications for other disciplines and there are occasional references to these also.

Marx and Ideology

What follows is not intended to be a detailed exegesis of Marx's writing or the voluminous secondary literature. I intend to use Marx only as a resource to draw out certain key notions which will then be further developed and modified. The discussion is therefore selective and ignores several issues normally associated with Marx: for example, there is little discussion of economic questions, notions of domination or class conflict. Rather the emphasis is on identifying a group of key ideological markers or indices which can be usefully employed in formulating the concept of ideology as decontestation.

Just as the concept of ideology itself has had a chequered history, so Marx's own use of the term has been the subject of much debate. There is at least a consensus that Marx never gave an explicit account of ideology and that his use of the term developed over time. What is clear is that Marx worked with a negative conception of ideology and as Kolakowski observes, could not have identified with the positive or 'scientific' notion of ideology championed by Lenin or Stalin (Kolakowski 1978 : 154). Parekh distinguishes two notions of ideology in Marx : ideology as idealism, which is characteristic of his early writings and ideology as apologia, which represents, in Parekh's opinion, the more mature, later version (Parekh 1982).

Whilst there seems to be general agreement regarding the early attack on idealism, the character of Marx's later work is more contentious. Parekh's account emphasises that Marx saw ideology as a critical or, in Parekh's term, a 'logical' inquiry, not a sociological or psychological one (ibid. : 46). Consequently, the key features of ideology are not to be located in the source of beliefs (their genetic origins) or in the minds of those who hold them (their psychological manifestations) but in the production of '...a body of thought which is systematically biased towards a particular social group' (ibid. : 46). This 'systematic bias' results, at base, from writers being insufficiently self-critical of the assumptions on which the body of thought is based. It is because the author is insufficiently critical of these assumptions that the body of thought produced exhibits defects and can considered ideological. In order to develop these ideas it will be useful to briefly look at Marx's criticism of idealism and his later account of ideology.

Ideology as idealism

Marx's criticism of idealism centres round the dualism of matter and spirit and the nature of consciousness. For Marx, idealism referred to any philosophical position which proposed that consciousness could be studied abstracted from social and historical conditions, that is, that there could be such a thing as the study of consciousness 'as such' which had some timeless, universal validity. For Marx, abstract concepts are simply those which identify common elements and have no existence beyond a summary of those common elements. The only things which are 'real' are the historical forms which consciousness takes at particular times, there is no notion of 'essential consciousness' which exists outside its particular manifestations. Idealists, according to Marx, fail to recognise this and believe that consciousness can be studied in an ahistorical manner and its 'true' nature determined. Because idealists see spirit as not only independent of matter but also ontologically prior, they consequently over-emphasise the role that ideas have in the development of human history and therefore provide a radically misconceived account of society and human beings.

Marx's own view was that, far from consciousness existing in some ethereal realm divorced from the material world, consciousness was grounded in the material world; it was a product

of material conditions. In a well-known passage from *The German Ideology* the position is clearly stated:

> The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of the politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics of a people. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a *camera obscura,* this phenomena arises just as much from their historical life-processes as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-processes...The phantoms formed in the human brain are...necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises...Life is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by life.'
>
> (The German Ideology : 13 -15 in Caute 1967)

The point is made again in Marx's *Preface* to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy:*

> It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but, on the contrary, their social being which determines their consciousness.
>
> (in Eagleton op. cit. : 80)

For Marx, consciousness is the product of material conditions and any attempt to study it isolated from these conditions is bound to be unsuccessful and result in a distorted account. Much depends on how 'consciousness' is to be understood: does it refer 'all the contents of the mind' or only to specific sets of beliefs e.g., the religious, political or moral? Marx seems to intend the former (which would entail the latter), '...Consciousness is...from the very beginning

a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.' (*The German Ideology* in Caute op. cit. : 19). His claim that the, 'Conceiving, thinking, mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the *direct efflux* (my emphasis) of their material behaviour.' also suggests that he is referring to 'all the contents of the mind.' There are several difficulties with this position.

If consciousness is determined by material conditions then different material conditions must be capable of producing common elements of consciousness or 'different' material conditions are in fact the same at some points. The poverty stricken and the affluent will have a consciousness which is similar in many respects: sensual awareness, a common language, intentionality, values, imagination, memory etc. The contents of memory, the objects of valorisation, the style of language etc. may be different but the possession of such mental capacities must be a part of what it is to be a human being. If our consciousness is determined by material conditions then it would seem that either diverse material conditions are capable of producing common elements of consciousness or all material conditions share common elements despite surface differences.

In effect Marx equivocates between two notions of consciousness. Consciousness as 'all the contents of the mind', call it Consciousness 1 (C1), and consciousness as a 'specific set of beliefs' e.g. religious, moral or political, call that Consciousness 2 (C2), seems to be the sort of division at play. We now need to subtract C2 from C1 which gives us Consciousness 3 (C3). C3 is what Marx wants to see as 'first directly interwoven' with material practices; without these basic mental abilities no material practice is possible. However, C3 cannot be the product of material practices if material practices are dependent upon the existence of C3. C2, specific sets of beliefs, are not interwoven with material practices in the same way as C3 but belong to what Marx later called the 'superstructure' in contrast to the material base.

The relationship between C2 and C3 is not symmetrical: C3 could exist without C2 but C2 could not exist without C3. To be a self-conscious being it is not necessary to have a specific set of moral, religious or political beliefs however to be a self-conscious being it is necessary to have the mental capacities represented by C3. C3 amounts to an ontological claim about what it is to be a self conscious being; C2 is optional and according to Marx, appears when man escapes from the 'herd-consciousness' and the division between mental and manual labour

occurs.

Consciousness, 'ideas', cannot be the product of material practices for material practices require conscious agents to carry them out. What agents involved in material practices require is some sort of language; some form of symbolisation which enables them, at the least, to partake of intentional actions (this point is developed in Chapter 2). Marx, at times, acknowledges this as when he talks about the production of ideas, conceptions and consciousness as being, '...directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men...' but however consciousness is interwoven with practice, for Marx it is practice which has the upper hand and determines the production of consciousness; ideas are always secondary to material existence.

In Marx's opinion the idealists therefore misrepresent the relationship between consciousness and practice: they turn the relationship on its head and conceive of material practice as if it were the effect of consciousness rather than vice-versa. It is this failure to recognise the historical, material basis of consciousness which leads to the production of an over-abstracted account of consciousness because it attempts to furnish an ahistorical, universal characterisation of something which, in Marx's view, is necessarily contingent.

It clearly makes no sense to locate ideology at the level of 'all the contents of the mind' (C1) for if all consciousness is ideological, then the term picks out nothing we could identify either with or in our consciousness. The potential for removing ideology is also called into question for if all consciousness is ideological where are the requisite critical tools to be found? The basic mental capacities (C3) also seem unlikely candidates for they are what enables us to exist from day to day and, although mundane, admit of strong pragmatic justification as to their providing an objective understanding of certain features of the world. Ideology arises at C2 with specific sets of beliefs and, on Marx's account, must be the result of defects in some aspects of material practice. Larrain sees ideology as the result of 'limited material practices' and representing the, '...solution at the level of social consciousness to contradictions which have not been solved in practice' (Larrain 1983 : 28). In other words, contradictions at the level of material practice produce ideology which is an attempt to mask or disguise those very contradictions: 'In its simplest form ideology denies the existence of contradictions' (ibid. : 39).

If consciousness is the product of material practices, then ideological consciousness must also have its basis in material practices but in practices which somehow contain contradictions. Ideology is therefore a mechanism which attempts to defuse or decontest what is contestable by denying that contradictions exist. This links with ideology as apologia for in this form ideology is essentially the process of universalising what is a narrow or partial view. However before discussing that position some points need to be drawn from the notion of ideology as idealism.

Perhaps the key feature here is Marx's insistence on the historical nature of consciousness and his criticism of over-abstraction. That ideas and beliefs have a history stands as a reminder against those who would claim to give a definitive, timeless account of how certain ideas or beliefs are to be understood. The history of a concept, belief (or practice) represents a resource which can be invoked as a means of evaluating any currently proposed characterisations of a concept, belief or practice and therefore to deny that such things have a history is to remove possible alternatives to whatever account is being presented. As such the denial of history represents a decontesting strategy which wishes to privilege one account over all others. As will be discussed in later chapters, in some cases to proclaim that 'A is B' is a perfectly legitimate procedure but not in all. Marx's materialist account of consciousness probably makes a similar error to that which he identified in the idealists, namely, to assign creative powers to one aspect of reality at the exclusion of another. It also underplays the role that language has in constituting parts of the social world even if, as McLean points out, Marx did at times claim that ideas are constitutive of the social world and not simply reflections of it (McLean 1995 : 17). The thrust of Marx's position is that the removal of ideology requires changes in the nature of material practice, particularly economic relationships, rather than paying attention to the language or ideas which pertain to these material practices.

Ideology as apologia

It is in the idea of ideology as apologia that the elements of ideology as a process of decontestation become clearer. The ideologist as idealist studies abstract and general concepts but they have no content because, in Marx's view, they are divorced from the material base.

Consequently, the ideologist supplies the content himself and then presents the subsequent account as definitive. For example, Marx's criticism of the bourgeois account of 'freedom' is that one *possible* account of the concept is presented as the *only* account; the ideologist universalises his own account and presents it as *the* account. That is, the ideologist attempts to justify or present what is a sectional or partial view as if it had universal validity; he thus becomes an apologist for that particular point of view.

An individual can be an apologist in two ways: either as an open advocate of a particular group or as a genuine disinterested observer who ends up as a apologist for a group. The first cohort Marx terms the 'base' writers: openly partisan, lacking intellectual integrity, manipulators of the truth, concealers of information etc. Base writers are of two sorts. There are those who have no convictions of their own and are bought by groups to promulgate their views - 'hired prize-fighters' Marx terms them. The second sort of base writer has strong opinions of their own but still possesses the properties of character mentioned above, namely, they lack intellectual integrity.

Apart from base writers there are 'vulgar' writers who are concerned to pursue truth but operate at a level of analysis which is confined to the 'surface of things' and thus their results are misleading and they, inadvertently, end up promoting the views of a particular group. Base writers are ideologues by design, vulgar writers by default. The first group might include P.R. men and women, some journalists, some academics. The second might include, 'higher' journalism, popularisers of ideas on social issues, some academics. To describe a writer as 'vulgar' is to criticise his level of inquiry; because he fails to dig deep enough he recycles the surface phenomena with its assumptions and as a consequence, unintentionally or otherwise, reproduces those assumptions.

Ideological thought can therefore be produced either intentionally or unintentionally. This is an important point because it removes from the identification of ideology any references to the motives of its producers which is not to claim that such people may not have suspect motives but it is not these which identify something as ideological.

Ideology as apologia stems from a failure to be sufficiently critical in one's analysis; it is the result of operating at too superficial a level. In particular, it is the result of working with

unexamined assumptions, of failing to appreciate the limitations of a certain perspective or point of view. This failure inevitably leads to distortions and arises from undertaking the analysis from a 'narrow social point of view.' This deficiency is not just a source of simple mistakes but constitutes the systematic error which characterises ideological thinking. Uncritical forms of inquiry tend to advance illegitimate, universal claims.

Marx contrasted the 'narrow social point of view' with seeing society 'as a whole' and argued that it is only from the latter perspective that an objective account of society is possible (Parekh op. cit. : 18). There are clearly difficulties with such a suggestion (some of which are discussed below) but it is what characterises the 'narrow social point of view' which provides some key ideological markers.

Because the narrow view is based on unexamined assumptions, these assumptions are, by definition, taken for granted by those who operate with them. Consequently, their limits are unrecognised and this leads to the making of two types of claim: the first *is* a universal claim and the second, an absolutist claim. The tendency to universalise and absolutise claims arises when what *appears* self-evident and natural to one group is presented as what *is* self-evident and natural. ('Universalise' in this sense should be taken as 'generalise' to avoid possible confusions between universalising for individuals and universalising for all: it is the generalising, 'universalising for all', notion which is relevant here). To 'absolutise' is to present what is historical and/or social as if it were natural. These two types of claim are not identical. A universalising claim does not have to be absolutist; there is no necessary connection between claiming that everyone should adopt a certain perspective and locating this perspective as part of the natural order. However, an absolutist claim does seem to imply a universalist one; if something is portrayed as part of the natural order, then it would have universal application. For example, if competition is claimed to be part of human nature, then it must be present in all individuals i.e., it has a universal character.

These two concepts - universalisation and absolutism - have connections with Larrain's point that ideology is essentially about denying the existence of contradictions because they are both decontesting mechanisms. To present something as being part of the natural world or part of a natural order, is to ascribe to it a particular ontological status; it is to perceive something as

akin to a brute fact about the world whose character is independent of human wishes, desires or beliefs. That there are such brute facts is incontrovertible but the ideological move is to represent something as a brute fact when it is not. It is a brute fact about human beings that they need air and water to survive but it is not so obvious a brute fact about human beings that they are naturally competitive. The brute facts about the need for air and water stand as givens; they are not open to a serious challenge; they are not contestable. That human beings are naturally competitive is a contestable claim.

Similarly, a universalistic claim may be made where one account or definition of a concept is presented as the only definition. This need not be an instance of absolutism. For example, a particular definition of freedom or liberty might be presented as the only acceptable account without the attendant rider that such a definition reflects the natural order of things. A particular view of an activity e.g., education, might be presented as the only acceptable view; the only one which truly captures the essential nature of education. Although such claims are often rooted in some concept of human nature, it is possible to hold such views on grounds which are of a more pragmatic or instrumental character. The decontesting thrust of such universalising claims is to privilege one perspective above others and this process becomes ideological, in Marx's opinion, when the limitations of the perspective are unacknowledged and a narrow social view is generalised (universalised).

Marx argues that men tend to universalise and absolutise their views because they assume what is self-evident and natural *to them* is what is self evident and natural; that the limits of their world are the limits of the world. Although Marx makes reference to the 'interests' of particular groups in the sense that holding certain views serves their particular interests it is debatable how significant this notion is in his overall theory of ideology. He certainly talks about the interests which are served by particular points of view but this is not what makes a body of thought ideological for, in some cases, it may be perfectly legitimate for a groups interests to be championed e.g. the disabled, homeless etc. (This is brought out by Geuss in his discussion of 'Herrschaft' Geuss op. cit. : 15-18). It is also possible that a body of thought held by a particular group is ideological but does not serve their interests. Rather, ideological thought is that which results from the universalisation of a particular, narrow point of view.

In the light of above, it can also be seen to be necessarily biased toward that point of view because it is based on the unexamined assumptions characteristic of the point of view. The ideologist 'speaks for', 'justifies', is an apologist for that point of view.

An account of ideology which concentrates on the theoretical limitations of beliefs or concepts avoids many of the problems often associated with ideology. As was mentioned before, it does not locate ideology in the psyche or become entangled in questions of motivation or whether the ideological thinking is consciously recognised as such by its proponents. This is why ideology as false consciousness is unhelpful: to use false consciousness as the marker for ideology is to make ideology contingent upon the effects a set of beliefs may or may not have on an individual. As individual psyches are different, whether or not something is ideological will depend upon an empirical study into the effects certain beliefs have on individuals and we may find that some beliefs are ideological for some but not for others. False consciousness may be an effect of ideology but it is not what makes beliefs ideological. The *criteria* for identifying ideology do not lie in the effects that such thinking has although this is an important reason for wishing to identify ideology; if ideology had no practical outcomes it would hardly warrant attention.

That people actually hold ideological beliefs also removes the temptation to see ideology as just a body of false beliefs or a tissue of lies. As Bamborough remarks, any ideology will be a mixture of true and false beliefs because any ideology which was 'completely false' would have no persuasive power and few, if any, adherents (Bamborough 1975 : 199). Persuasive power may be associated with ideological thinking but ideology is not simply rhetoric: persuading someone not to throw themselves off a bridge does not constitute ideological thinking.

Concentrating on the theoretical deficiencies of beliefs enables beliefs to be separated from their social origins but there is a tension here. The notion that ideology arises from universalising/ absolutising a narrow social point of view harks back to ideology as arising from a limited material practice. A narrow social point of view could be seen as the inevitable product of a limited material practice. However, to avoid the genetic fallacy of locating the warrantability of beliefs in their social origins, we need to sever any strict causal connection between material practice and beliefs or consciousness, otherwise the genetic factor *would* be

criterial for assessing the warrantability of beliefs. Denying a strict causal connection between the origins of a belief and its warrantability does not entail that people who are members of particular social groups will not have a tendency to see things from a certain perspective. The rejoinder 'Well, she would say that she's an X, Y or Z' illustrates that we do often expect certain beliefs to be characteristic of certain social locations but to insist that there is a strict causal relationship operating is illegitimate. Perhaps 150 years ago the nature of society was such that the existence of such a connection seemed plausible but today it is less convincing, especially if we see beliefs or consciousness as the product of factors other than the participation in particular material practices.

Whilst it is possible to identify distinct social groups, they often contain people from diverse backgrounds whose 'material practices' may have little in common. There is a tension between any account of the genesis of beliefs which roots them in material practice and a desire to consider the origin of a belief as irrelevant to its warrantability. This is a well-known problem in Marx but I don't see that an account of ideology as apologia needs to take on this difficulty. We can consistently hold that, as a matter of empirical fact, certain perspectives are often correlated with particular social locations without endorsing a strict causal relationship between the two. A weaker formulation of the relationship may be through notions such as 'inform', 'influence', 'contribute to' etc. (2). The source of beliefs must be seen as independent of their warrantability so that even if a particular perspective is characteristic of a certain social group, that does not make it ideological. The universalise/absolutise criteria can be applied without reference to the source of beliefs and, in many cases, identifying beliefs with one or other social group or groups is not always possible, unless we take 'holding the belief' as defining the social group itself in which case the notion of a social group becomes excessively malleable and courts redundancy.

In fact, the requirement that ideology be linked to a narrow *social* point of view seems unnecessarily restrictive not only because of the difficulties in identifying a perspective with a significant social location but it also carries the suggestion that the content of the beliefs or perspective are, perhaps, only concerned with 'social issues' conceived in a narrow sense. There is a way in which 'social issues' are nowadays distinguished from other sorts of issues

e.g., scientific, personal, historical - even political. My own inclination is to concentrate on the nature of the perspective itself without the need to relate it to either a specific social group or to feel it must have a social content where 'social' is conceived in a narrow manner.

The contrasting of a 'narrow social point of view' with that of 'seeing society as a whole' raises further difficulties. If ideology arises from universalising a narrow social point of view, then to avoid ideology we need a view which takes in all of society, a global perspective. Whether such a notion makes sense is questionable. To achieve an 'ideology free' perspective would require that the inquirer moved beyond the superficial study of society and conducted his analysis in a critical, rigorous and impartial manner. He would also need to be aware of the historical specificity of society and eschew the temptations of over-abstractionism. In other words, he has to be sufficiently critical of the assumptions underlying his investigation. However, the belief that such techniques would furnish a view of society 'as a whole' seems optimistic; societies are vastly complex and constantly changing. We can accept that some perspectives on the social world are more reliable, better informed, have greater explanatory force without needing to claim that there is one view which takes in society 'as a whole.'

This desire for a global view looks not unlike the Enlightenment ideas of 'a view from nowhere' or 'a God's eye-view': a perspective which takes all in but is not itself taken in. The conception of ideology as a blueprint for society (a view characteristic of Lenin) draws on this belief that some suitably equipped intellect could cast a celestial eye over the social world and provide a account which was truly objective. There are indications here of transposing the scientific model of inquiry, which had been so successful in analysing the natural world, to the social.

The difficulties with such a position are well-known (see Luntley 1995) but there are no reasons why a theory of ideology need aspire to such heights. Notions of truth and objectivity do not have to be abandoned because we cannot provide a universal account of society. Whilst being critical of the assumptions which underpin any form of inquiry is important, the idea of an 'assumptionless' critical theory veers dangerously towards the over-abstractionism which Marx condemned in others. Any self-reflective theory will rest on assumptions for only on the basis of some assumptions can a self-critical examination proceed. There seems to be no

reason why some aspects of society may not be studied in isolation from others with which they share no significant relationship. For example, the analysis of ideological thinking in education may be undertaken without the need to situate it in some view of 'society as a whole' or examine its connections with medicine or the horticultural industry. If we attend on the formulation of such a global viewpoint prior to undertaking any critical analysis we merely concoct a recipe for permanent inertia.

It is not my intention to try and discuss the numerous issues which arise from Marx's account of ideology but to now draw together the central themes and provide a modified version of ideology which centres on decontestation. One means of doing this is to briefly look at Marx's notion of the self.

Marx rejects the idea of an ahistorical account of man: there is no concept of man other than his specific historical existences. On the other hand he believed in the ability of human beings to be active and achieve a state of existence free from oppression. In contrast to writers such as Hobbes, Marx had an optimistic view of human nature and saw man as capable of improvement given the requisite economic and social conditions (see Stevenson 1974 : ch. 5, Trigg 1985 : ch. 7). However, whilst some aspects of human beings are historically specific others appear to have a more permanent nature. The problem arises in Marx's discussion of consciousness where the idea presented was that all the elements of consciousness arose from material practice. Whatever the intricacies of interpreting Marx on this point, some elements of consciousness do not seem optional.

Essential notions would include an awareness of one's immediate environment, the ability to distinguish oneself from the environment, some basic responses to physiological needs e.g. hunger, thirst etc. Once we move on to the stage where human beings are involved in practical activity e.g. the production of artefacts, then concepts of space, time and causality are indispensable. Although I do not propose to identify the division between humans and non-humans on the basis of language possession, the division between language users and non-language users is fundamental. Whether or not human beings were *human* beings before they acquired language, the acquisition of language signalled a move into a radically different way

of being. Human beings are language users and any society which is recognisably human will be a language using society. My contention is, therefore, that although the existence of language was a specific event, our understanding of what it is to be human is now inextricably connected with what it is to be a language user.

On this basis we can suggest that the possession of a language is not just some historically specific contingent feature of being a human being but is as near as we are likely to get to an essential feature of being a human being (the details of this claim are developed in the following chapters).

Marx has little to say about language and was writing before the Hercynian shift in (some) western philosophy where the study of language usurped epistemology as the central concern. His notion of the self as historical to the core ignores the role language plays in the human world and particularly in the human social world. This omission is probably based on a view of language inherited from writers such as Locke, who assigned to it an essentially passive function in the operations of the mind. On Locke's view language was an elaborate labelling system, a way of keeping track of things, a recorder and chronicler of events not something with the power to actively influence those events (Locke's views are discussed in Chapter 3). Marx fails to appreciate the extent to which the social world is a symbolic world, a world with a linguistic structure. Whilst natural languages are historically specific entities, the existence and development of 'language' enabled human beings to enter into a social world which is forever beyond the reach of those who lack language.

Although he never explicitly states it, his view of the relationship between practice and language would be one of master and slave: practice dominates language. Whilst a crude economic determinism with respect to the base/ superstructure model is more representative of his earlier (less mature) thought, this relationship does seem to continue to play an important role in his later thinking. Even if we allow that the superstructure feeds back to the base in some manner, Marx does not want to assign other than a minor significance to this influence. He therefore fails to conceive of the relationship between practice and language in a suitably nuanced fashion, presenting one model as of universal application. This model derives from a view of the social world which is heavily influenced by a model of how language is

related to the natural physical world, namely, as something which simply labels or represents what is already there. As will be argued in the following chapters, the natural physical world is ontologically independent of language in a way that the social world is not but Marx tends to conceive both on the same model. This is not entirely surprising from a man who dedicated Das Kapital to Charles Darwin and is credited as the father of 'scientific' socialism.

A critical conception of ideology

Notwithstanding some of the theoretical problems in Marx's theory of ideology it does provide some key notions which will be retained and developed. Ideology is sometimes identified with 'taken-for-granted' ways of thinking although this alone is no guarantee of ideological thought: I take it for granted that the postman will deliver letters addressed to my home but this is not an example of ideological thinking. It is perfectly reasonable to take some assumptions 'for granted' and ordinary life would be impossible if we did not. Given a lack of any disconfirming experiences, taking certain things for granted is an essential part of everyday life and (significantly), if called upon to so do, this attitude could be rationally justified. The sort of taken-for-grantedness relevant to ideology is that which Marx identifies as a lack of critical awareness, of holding views in an unthinking manner, of not examining the bases on which they are held.

There is a difficulty here which arises for how we identify those areas where critical awareness is due. Given that in several aspects of life a 'taken-for-grantedness' with regard to certain ideas is legitimate, then we can avoid the enervating position of having to be constantly critical, a position which is both psychologically draining and theoretically untenable. There is, therefore, some conception of a range of ideas which do not, in the normal course of events, require critical awareness. However, the interest of this thesis is with a particular set of claims where something belonging to one category is presented as belonging to another. In order to identify such cases some critical awareness is required but there appear to be no hard and fast rules which clearly delineate between instances when critical awareness is or is not required. All we can do is draw on experience and whatever knowledge we might possess in relation to a particular area. We might see the need for critical awareness when faced with questions or

problems whose outcome has significant effects on people's lives and the world we inhabit. In particular it might be needed when faced with instances where attempts to decontest the nature of certain beliefs is suspected.

The emphasis on unexamined assumptions, on the failure to be sufficiently critical and the consequent generalisation of particular perspectives (universalism and absolutism) are important elements of ideology. The claims to absolutism, the reduction of the social to the natural, share with universalism the desire to impose a notion of certainty, of definition and consensus. The denial of history or the attempt to render accounts of perspectives which ignore their history, can also be seen as a potential ideological marker for the history of many concepts and practices is one of disagreement and dispute. These inclinations are also features of over or under abstraction; of finding certainty in either the formal or the everyday. Ideology can therefore be conceptualised as a process of decontestation, of attempting to supply determinate, secure answers.

In some areas of inquiry such techniques are legitimate e.g. formal definitions in logic or mathematics or scientific generalisations, but in others they may not be. Whilst few would contest that the definition of a square imposes a determinate characterisation of a geometrical figure and thus sets up a specific set of criteria by which squares are to be identified, the case would be different if what was being specified were the defining characteristics of, say, 'education', 'liberty' or 'justice': '*This* is what education means' or '*This* is how to understand justice'.

Freeden sees ideologies as '...configurations of decontested meanings.' (Freeden op. cit. : 76). This leaves open the mechanisms by which ideologies may seek to achieve decontestation but it does emphasises the dogmatism which is characteristic of much ideological thinking. Freeden's definition however does not distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate techniques of decontestation. To distinguish between these two important categories I will use the terms 'benign decontestation' to indicate the legitimate cases of decontestation and 'malign decontestation' to indicate the illegitimate. Freeden's use of the word 'meanings' highlights the relationship between ideologies and language for although ideology is related to action (which can include non-action) at a deeper level it is concerned with the formulation and

articulation of a set of beliefs for it is the beliefs which provide the rationalisations for the action (or lack of it).

A concern for language is not simply logomachy but a recognition that language operates as more than just a means to straightforward communication or that which makes thought possible. Language is something we as human beings are 'plugged into' and although the importance of language is now widely recognised, the ways in which it enters into our lives and influences our behaviour needs to be carefully explored. One of Marx's problems is that he works with an insufficiently critical understanding of how language operates in the social world and, in effect, universalises one model of language, namely, how language relates to the natural world, presenting this as *the* way in which language works. It is his failure to recognise the limitations of this model and apply it outside of its legitimate domain which turns the charge of ideological thinking on himself. Once we see language as partly constitutive of the social world, attention to language becomes important because the language we use will be a determinant of the social world we produce.

'Decontestation' will be taken as the chief marker of ideological thinking and in the role played by language in this process examined. Eagleton suggests that the concept of ideology is best understood in the light of Wittgenstein's theory of 'family resemblances', '...a network of over-lapping features rather than some constant essence' (Eagleton op. cit. : 193). If we consider ideology in its broadest sense and include the positive and neutral accounts as well as the negative, then the search for an essence of ideology will be something of a fruitless task. However, if we are concerned with a negative conception, then 'malign decontestation' may serve to identify some common aspect of ideological thinking whilst allowing that there may be several mechanisms through which it is achieved.

Before concentrating on the ways that language might be seen as constitutive of the social world in Chapter 3, it is necessary to make some more general remarks about the nature of language and in particular indicate the limitations to the ways in which language might be constitutive of reality. Chapter 2 is therefore something of a ground clearing exercise designed to make some necessary points about how language functions in relation to different parts of the world. A coherent and plausible constitutive theory of language has to avoid over-stating

its case and slipping into a type of linguistic idealism. If a convincing case can be made for seeing language as partly constitutive of the social world, then various implications follow for any analysis of ideology and ideological language. Given that thinking informs understanding and action, basing such activities on ideological modes of thought will have practical effects for the nature of the social world.

NOTES

1. In 1998 the Labour government introduced the notion of a 'Third Way' which was meant to provide an alternative between capitalism and socialism. One of the justifications cited for articulating such a position was to provide New Labour with an intellectual framework or 'ideology' which would supply the necessary rationale for their policies. Clearly such a use of the term 'ideology' was intended to be seen in a positive manner.

2. There are issues to do with how Marx's use of the word 'determine' is to be understood. It did not have the implication of some mechanical necessity that English speakers may attribute and Marx often uses terms such as 'condition' ,'shape', 'mould' to describe the relationship between material conditions and consciousness (See Parekh op. cit. : 25-26).

CHAPTER TWO : LANGUAGE AND ONTOLOGY

Language and the Natural World

If we are concerned with the extent to which language be constitutive of aspects of the social world then it is important to acknowledge the constraints or limits on what language can do. Failure to correctly identify such restrictions can lead to either the emasculation of language or the attribution of creative powers normally reserved for supernatural beings. This chapter, therefore, is an attempt to clarify some basic issues regarding the relationship between language and reality. It does not pretend to offer an exhaustive analysis of what is an extensive and complex topic but to make some general observations relevant to the present inquiry. One way of approaching the subject is from an ontological analysis which distinguishes amongst those things which are language dependent and those which are not.

At the most basic level the independent existence of a physical world seems incontrovertible; if there were no human beings the physical world would still exist. We have good reasons to believe that prior to the arrival of human beings there existed other life forms on the planet and before them a planet consisting only of inanimate matter. If all human life were to be obliterated overnight we would still expect there to be rivers, mountains, trees (and also concrete evidence of our own activity, namely, bridges, roads and houses although these are clearly not independent of human beings in the same way as are rivers, mountains or trees). The type of independence being claimed is ontological, that is, that some things can exist in the absence of others.

Formally we can express the condition as:

X is ontologically independent of Y iff X could exist in the absence of Y.

In the case of the natural physical world, (X), the relationship with human beings, (Y), is of ontological independence: the existence of a natural physical world is not dependent on the existence of human beings. The reverse condition does not hold: human beings are not ontologically independent of the natural physical world but are ontologically dependent on there

being such a world. (I am ignoring the possibility of some disembodied existence in a non-physical realm).

We are born into a world as beings with a physical manifestation and are, in some respects, subject to the same principles which describe the behaviour of the physical aspects of that world. So much may seem obvious but the recognition that there exists a natural physical world and that we are part of it, or, more accurately, that there is a part of us that is a part of it, has significant implications for the role of language. If there are natural physical features of the world which are ontologically independent of human beings then these aspects will also be independent of any language which human beings evolve. Given a language we can form beliefs about the natural physical world, express our enjoyment at its grandeur, adopt a particular attitude towards it, use its resources for our own purposes, investigate the principles which regulate its behaviour etc., but the existence of a natural physical world is not contingent upon the exercise of such activities by human beings.

By means of a language we can formulate propositions about the physical world, e.g., 'There is ice at the South Pole.' However, whether or not there is ice at the South Pole is not dependent upon the existence of a proposition which says that there is. To formulate any proposition we need a language of some sort with an agreed semantics and grammar but because we need language to express a proposition it does not follow that the truth of that proposition is itself language dependent. The fact that there is ice at the South Pole is what we can call a *brute fact* about the world, we need a language to state this fact but the fact so stated exists independently of the means by which it is expressed. Brute facts are independent of human opinions and language: we cannot *decide* what the brute facts of the world shall be in the way that it can be decided what that the current rate of V.A.T. will be.

The existence of brute facts and the role of language in relation to them, represents what I will call a *basic ontological constraint* on what language can do. There is a distinction which needs to be observed between requiring a language to formulate a proposition about some state of affairs and the state of affairs itself existing independently of the linguistic formulation. The formulation of the proposition does not bring the state of affairs into existence in such cases but rather makes a claim about something whose existential status is independent of the proposition

itself. What the basic ontological constraint is trying to remove is a temptation to confuse that which language may represent with that which is so represented. In the case of the natural physical world the claim is that what language represents exists independently of any system of representation which may be applied to it.

Consider a famous case from history. When Pope Gregory decreed a change in calendar in 1582 people rioted because they would 'lose' ten days between October the fifth and fifthteenth (those who paid their rent monthly obviously had good cause). Many believed that their lives had actually been shortened by ten days i.e. they would live for ten days fewer than before. The error is clearly to confuse the means by which something may be represented, in this case the passage of time, with the thing itself. How long a person may live is dependent on many factors e.g., genetic inheritance, economic status, geographical location, lifestyle etc., but simply changing the way time is measured does not influence these determinants. It is as if we redefined a year as equivalent to six months instead of twelve and all rejoiced because the average life span was now 150 years.

We can express the idea by saying that although language is employed in studying the natural physical world it is not constitutive of that world in the sense that the natural physical world would be different if language did not exist. Language is not constitutive of the natural physical world in the way that flesh and blood are constitutive of human beings. This is not to argue that language cannot affect and influence how we view the natural physical world or how we engage with it but rather to make the point that the ontological status of this world is independent of human beings and language.

The ontological claim that there exists a natural physical world independent of human beings is different from epistemological claims regarding what we can know about that world. Ontological claims are concerned with ascribing modes of existence to different types of entities whereas epistemological claims are concerned with the truth or falsity of propositions or judgements. Both types of claims may be subjective or objective.

The existence of a natural physical world is ontologically objective in that it ascribes a mode of being which is independent of the thoughts or feelings that any individual may have. Pains constitute a group of entities whose existence is subjective because their existence is dependent

upon being felt by individuals: 'pains' do not continue to exist in the absence of anyone experiencing them.

Similarly epistemological claims may be objective in that whether they are true or not is independent of anyone's feelings or opinions on the matter e.g. 'Mt. Everest is the highest mountain in the world.' Epistemically subjective claims are those where the truth or falsity is more difficult to discern because feelings, attitudes or opinions are involved, e.g. 'France is the best place for a holiday.' The fact that something is ontologically subjective does not mean that we cannot make epistemologically objective statements, for example, 'I'm scared' refers to an emotional state which is ontologically subjective yet, given appropriate conditions and evidence, constitutes an epistemologically objective claim about a person. Similarly, it is possible to express epistemically subjective statements about ontologically objective entities e.g. 'Isn't the ocean beautiful?' (Similar examples can be given for the other two combinations - ontologically objective/epistemologically objective e.g., 'Mt. Everest is in Nepal' and ontologically subjective/ epistemologically subjective e.g., 'Pain is enjoyable').

Searle argues strongly that ontological claims are distinct from epistemological or alethic ones (Searle 1995 : 154). 'External realism' is the ontological thesis that, '...there exists a reality totally independently of our representations of it' (ibid. : 155) where the word 'representations' includes not only language but perceptions, thoughts and beliefs. (1). As such it makes no claims about 'how things are in the world' or what the 'facts' about the world are, rather, in Searle's view, '...we could be totally mistaken about how the world is in every detail yet realism could still be true' (ibid. : 155).

Considering the possibility that one of our mistakes might be believing in a material world, Searle sees no conflict between his external realism and idealism for it is not that the natural physical world had to turn out one way rather than another but that whatever way it did turn out is independent of our representations of it. From this it does not necessarily follow that all our representations are in error (and there are good reasons to suppose that, at least in an everyday sense, that they are not) but that whether or not they are accurate is determined by something independent of the representations themselves. In the case of the natural physical

world there is a distinction to be made between how things are and judgements about how things are.

There are several objections to this position. One which is particularly relevant to the present inquiry and concerns the argument that there is no physical reality which exists independent of language. Goodman offers an account which claims that there is no 'world' which is accessible independent of one's symbol system and consequently the belief in such a world can play no role in our inquiries (Goodman 1982).

Goodman wants to resist the idea that there is a place for a world which is independent of 'world-versions', that is, a world which is common for all. For Goodman the notion of a world which is independent of all human representations is vacuous as all access to reality is through representations. He expresses his position as follows:

> Has a constellation been there as long as the stars that compose it, or did it come into being only when selected and designated? In the latter case the constellation was created by a version. And what could be meant by saying that the constellation was always there, before any version? Does this mean that all configurations of stars whatever are always constellations whether or not picked out and designated as such? I suggest ...that a constellation becomes such only as being chosen from among all configurations, much as a class becomes a kind only through being distinguished, according to some principle, from other classes. Now as we thus make constellations by picking them out and putting together certain stars rather than others, so we make stars by drawing certain boundaries rather than others. ..We have to make what we find, be it the Great Dipper, Sirius, food, fuel or a stereo system.
>
> (ibid. : 34)

If Goodman is simply pointing out that any investigation into the world, be it the natural or social, requires a conceptual framework or symbol system, a 'version' i.e., a language of some kind, then no one would argue. Any such inquiry must involve the ability to frame propositions,

make distinctions, analyse information, communicate ideas etc. and such abilities are clearly dependent on having a language. Goodman's claim is stronger suggesting that what is real is to be judged relative to different versions, that, for example, in the case of constellations, the constellation has no existence prior to being brought under some conceptual scheme which picks it out as such.

A key misunderstanding in Goodman's case is indicated by the examples he uses when he says we have to, '...make what we find, be it the Great Dipper, Sirius, food, fuel, or a stereo system.' Ontologically these are of different kinds: artefacts such as stereo systems are not part of the natural world (or universe) in the same way that stars are. The Dog Star existed long before anyone saw, measured or named it; its existence is independent of any system of representation applied to it. The Dog Star was not *made* (unlike a stereo system) it was not fabricated according to some set of instructions. True, we need an astronomical symbol system to identify stars as different from planets or comets but such a system does not bring into existence something which was not previously there. In the case of a stereo system we also need a symbol system but its function is not simply to identify and class a previously existing entity but to facilitate the production of that entity. Goodman confuses the different ways in which symbol systems (language) are related to those things which are independent of language - stars, mountains, rivers etc. - and those things whose existence is in some way dependent on the existence of a language using species (this latter point is further developed in the next section).

Goodman also refers to the process of classification where things are grouped according to some principle. His view seems to be that there is a fair degree of arbitrariness about this, 'Nothing dictates whether the skies shall be marked off into constellations or other objects' (ibid. : 34). The argument that there is no one way of classifying the world is often cited as a justification for various kinds of relativism on the grounds that how the world is divided up ultimately turns on the adoption of a particular symbol system (language) from several alternatives none of which can claim authority. I do not intend to offer a detailed discussion of this topic but rather make some brief remarks.

It is true that we can classify things in many different ways e.g., by means of their physical properties, uses, effects, values, ages etc., and the same object can appear under several possible

classifications. The fact that the same person can be a son, father, uncle, husband and welder does not invite the question 'Yes, but which one is he *really* ?' In the case of Goodman's constellations, they are clearly just one way of classifying stars and whatever tenuous similarity each constellation has to some familiar object e.g. a plough, seen from another position in the universe no such similarity would exist: what we call the 'plough' may need to be renamed the 'cat' or the 'laughing parrot' when viewed from a different perspective.

In the natural world it is not the case that we can classify things however we like. Any classificatory system which did not distinguish solid objects as a type (as opposed to particular tokens) from air or water would find movement in the world a somewhat unpredictable activity (2). Similarly, a classification system which failed to distinguish between the poisonous and edible or dangerous and tame animals would result in a precarious existence. As Collin remarks, 'Strychnine is toxic, whether or not people have a term for toxicity... We are not dealing with mysterious fact-creating powers of linguistic classification...' (Collin 1997 : 92). In other words, there are certain brute facts about the natural physical world which cannot be ignored and which exist independently of any classification which may be applied.

Of course, we don't have to classify things simply because they share some physical similarities. For example, carcinogens are classified in terms of their effects and may have very little in common physically e.g., radiation and asbestos. Unless we concede that, in such cases, language is a way of identifying what is already there we are forced into the paradoxical position of having to conclude that prior to the identification and classification of cancer causing agents such substances lacked their ability to affect human beings in certain ways. We are then attributing to language to sort of causal powers mentioned above by Collin.

Goodman rejects the notion of an independently existing world claiming that there is no 'featureless raw material underlying different organisations... any raw material is as much the creature of a version as what is made out of that stuff' (ibid. : 33). This inevitably leads to problems regarding the identification of 'right categorisation' for the only reference can be to other symbol systems not to any independent reality. That certain categories have become, 'entrenched' is not to be explained by citing their 'rightness', that is, that they accord with how things are in the natural world but rather their rightness is derived from their entrenchment

(ibid. : 35). If entrenchment is not based on the notion of right categorisation but vice-versa then the explanation of entrenchment would seem to be of a non-rational kind, as if we had been caused or conditioned to categorise the world in this way. The question which then arises is 'Why have we been caused or conditioned to categorise the world in this way?' to which the most plausible response is 'Because this is the way things are.'

Whilst world versions may differ in particular respects, at the level of human bodies and movement within the world, some commonalty seems inevitable and the reason for this is most easily explained on the assumption that all symbol systems or languages which deal with such activities make reference to a common world which exists independently of those representative systems. In other words, Goodman's 'raw stuff' is not the product of a version but something which exists prior to any version and is picked out by language (3).

Goodman's problem is a failure to recognise the basic ontological constraint and extend the creative powers of language in an illegitimate manner. As will be examined in detail below, language does have significant creative powers but its relationship to its subject matter takes on different forms. In the case of the natural physical world its role is to facilitate various representational approaches to something whose existence is independent of those representations. There is thus a limit to what language can do in this area, a limit whose significance becomes apparent in ideological discussions regarding the scope of the natural and the social. However we need to consider the role of language in relation to man-made world in order to explore this argument.

Language and the Man -Made World

The natural physical world is not all of the physical world for there are clearly entities which are physical but not natural in the sense that rivers, mountains or trees are. Stereo systems are physical objects but they are the products of human activity; stereo systems are made not discovered, they are not naturally occurring entities. The world is replete with such objects, objects whose existence is dependent upon the existence and activity of human beings. The natural world itself has been changed by human activity and often what is considered 'natural'

in a landscape is in fact the result of deliberate human actions aimed at altering what was natural (4).

Imagine a spear fashioned from a piece of wood by a huntsman using a piece of flint. The object produced has certain physical properties : it is straight, made from resilient material, not too heavy and has a pointed end designed for penetrating hides or skin. The object has been constructed precisely so that it has these physical properties. Whilst out searching for food the huntsman comes across an object lying in his path which possesses almost identical properties to those of his spear. However, this object has not been fashioned by any individual but is the result of a lightening strike on a nearby tree. The lightning has split off a thin piece of wood in such a manner as to give it the physical properties of a spear.

This is not an unimaginable event; during the millions of such strikes which have and will occur it is highly likely that 'spear shaped' pieces of wood will be formed by natural forces. In terms of their physical characteristics, the man-made and the natural object are virtually identical, the huntsman may even take the natural object as evidence of another tribe in the vicinity. Although the man-made object has been consciously fashioned, purely in terms of its *physical* properties it is indistinguishable from the naturally produced one, that is, the physical properties of the object which make it a spear are not dependent upon the existence of human beings because identical physical properties can be produced by natural forces. Ontologically the existence of such physical properties is therefore independent of the existence of human beings.

If we are concerned with the physical properties of objects then parallel cases can be made out for other objects although as the complexity of the object increases the likelihood of such a method of production decreases. A chair produced by a carpenter will exhibit several recognisable physical characteristics but it is not impossible that during a whirlwind pieces of wood could be whipped up together and formed into something which shared the physical properties of the man-made object. Even works of art are not ruled out as long as we are concerned only with physical properties: the wind could erode a piece of rock to produce

something whose physical properties were similar to a Henry Moore sculpture or disperse pigments to produce a passable Jackson Pollock.

However, there do seem to be limitations on the physical properties which we might imagine could be naturally fashioned. Spears and rustic chairs are one thing but a nuclear submarine, plane or computer? The complexity of such objects must make us question when an empirical possibility become an impossibility. Logically, given an infinite number of worlds and infinite time perhaps a nuclear submarine could be produced by natural forces, however for practical purposes, the argument would appear to hold only for the most basic of objects. Our own experience tells us that whilst we might find something natural which has the physical properties of a comb we are unlikely to find anything which has the physical properties of a refrigerator or television but this may simply reflect our (necessarily limited) lack of the relevant experience. I propose therefore to accept that, logically, an object with the same physical properties as a man- made object could come to possess those properties through the actions of natural forces.

The upshot of this is that we cannot distinguish a man-made object (artefact) from a naturally occurring one simply by reference to physical properties for both may exhibit similar characteristics in this respect. The difference will need to lie in their process of 'coming to be'; their genesis. Artefacts will then be those objects whose genesis is dependent upon the existence of human beings. It does not follow from this that the continued (physical) existence of artefacts is dependent on the existence of human beings for, once produced, in terms of their physical properties, artefacts can continue to exist in the absence of human beings.

All artefacts will require some form of physical manifestation, they must possess some physical properties but a full understanding of artefacts is not possible simply by listing their physical properties. As was indicated above, in terms of physical properties artefacts may be indistinguishable from naturally formed entities. Artefacts (and naturally occurring objects) can be attributed properties which are non-physical in the sense that the possession of these properties is not identifiable in the way that physical properties are. If we return to the spear then this object may have non-physical properties which are related to its role and function within the life of the community within which it was fashioned. The spear clearly has a role in

the economic practices of the group through the provision of food either for direct consumption or exchange. It may also have a role as a means of signifying status within the group or feature in ceremonies as a symbol of the group's tradition as skilled hunters: the spear has a symbolic value or significance for the group which goes beyond its purely physical properties. This explains why, even when spears may have been replaced by guns, the spear may still fulfil a symbolic role in the group's cultural practices. Such non-physical properties can be attributed to natural objects (e.g. sun worship) as well as artefacts but unlike the physical properties of either natural objects or artefacts these non-physical properties are not intrinsic to the objects themselves. Non-physical properties are ontologically dependent on human beings for it is only by some process of human agreement that such properties come into existence.

I may possess a Samurai sword and full set of armour in mint condition, their physical properties as perfect as when they were made but I cannot become a Samurai warrior simply by wearing this armour and carrying the sword. The social world which imbued these objects with power and meaning no longer exists, feudal Japan is no more and no matter how authentically I dress, on the eve of the 21st. century it is impossible to be a genuine Samurai warrior. (Similarly, there is a sense in which people living in 20th. century Britain cannot worship Zeus or consult the oracle at Delos). What have disappeared are the social beliefs and practices which made 'being a Samurai warrior' possible; the physical objects still exist but their meaning or significance are no longer vital or relevant: we can only understand the significance they once had in a detached, historical manner.(5) The limits on what anyone can do are therefore not just empirical but also conceptual and social. Certain types of behaviour only make sense given a set of background assumptions.

The significance of this discussion for present purposes is to begin to identify how language appears in the production of artefacts and the attribution of non-physical properties to material objects. The production of any artefact will require action on the part of the producer; simply 'thinking about a spear' will not make a spear appear, although it may be a necessary first step. Given that the production of artefacts is not a random event whereby uncontrolled nervous

impulses result in something being made, some notion of intentionality must be involved. Searle characterise intentionality as,

> ...that property of many mental states and events by which they are directed at or about or of objects and states of affairs in the world...if I have an intention, it must be an intention to do something.
>
> (Searle 1983 : 1)

Intentionality signals a clear difference between actions undertaken with a conscious purpose in mind from the 'actions' of the sea or wind: we have no need to attribute intentionality in such cases. Searle refers to 'many' not all mental states for it is arguable that some mental states are not directed to states of affairs in the world e.g. pains. In other cases the mental state may have no clear referent in the world but be held in relation to some unspecified, generalised feeling e.g. angst. However that some mental states are directed to, or about, states of affairs in the world is manifest but these also need to be differentiated.

Animals may experience fear in relation to some state of affairs, e.g., the presence of a predator, where the mental state is clearly directed to or about an external situation. On Searle's account this is an intentional state but it does not follow that the animal intends to do anything about it, that is, follow some particular course of action. Intending to do something is not a necessary condition of being in a state of intentionality rather intending to do something represents a sub-group of intentionality.

The huntsman contemplating the production of a spear is in a mental state of intending to do something in the sense that he is consciously thinking about a possible course of action. From a pragmatic point of view this notion of intention seems logically tied up with any account of human action which is undertaken in a self-aware, uncoerced manner. This is not to say that I may do things I didn't intend to such as put oil instead of water in the car radiator but that the vast majority of actions are undertaken in an intentional way. (6).

Intention in the sense of 'intending to do something' is tied up with the possession of beliefs; without some set of beliefs I cannot intend to do anything. I do not have to intend that my heart

beats or my kidneys filter because these functions will proceed whether I have any intentions or not. Consequently, I also do not need to have any beliefs about such organs: I could live perfectly well with no knowledge whatsoever regarding the nature and function of these and many other organs.

The beliefs which lie behind all intentional acts may be explicit or tacit. An action such as posting a letter is based on a range of beliefs - that there exists a postal system, that writing is intelligible to others, that others exist, that sticking a small coloured piece of paper on the envelope will ensure its delivery, that there are correct places to put the envelope etc. At a more basic level it presupposes a notion of self; of a conscious entity whose existence persists, a notion of time; that there is a past present and future. Intentions are logically connected to a conception of time because they are future orientated: I cannot have retrospective intentions, I cannot intend to do something yesterday. Intention requires that I can represent to myself in some manner a possible future state of affairs, that I can imagine what might be the case should I successfully realise my intention.

Beliefs must be about something, I can believe X, Y, or Z but I cannot 'just believe' where there is no explicit or implicit object for that belief. Beliefs also presuppose the possession of concepts; I cannot believe X if I have no idea what X is. I cannot believe that tigers have stripes if I do not know what either 'tigers' or 'stripes' are. (I may of course have the belief that 'tigers have stripes' but use different terms not realising that what I call the 'jungle cat' is the same as 'tiger'). Once beliefs and concepts are involved so is language. To have the concept of a tiger is not the same as having a tiger in a cage but is to be able to understand that the word 'tiger' (or some equivalent term) represents or stands for a particular type of animal. The notion of representing or 'standing for' is fundamental to language because this is precisely what marks or sounds do. The word 'church' is not a church but a means of making reference to either particular buildings or more abstract entities such as 'The Church of England'.

Words are not icons in the way that a traffic sign indicating a hump-back bridge is a picture of a hump-back bridge; the word 'tree' looks nothing like a tree. This is why it is not possible to learn a foreign language by a close examination of the shapes or sound of words. There is no necessary relationship between a word and what it denotes or refers to outside of the

conventions of any particular language. The word 'tiger' could have been applied to a type of wood or 'stripes' to a variety of mushroom. In this sense words are symbols rather than signs because they do not indicate either geographically or temporally the presence of something else. Lightning is a sign of thunder, tracks are the sign of an animal and in these cases the two things are closely related but if I use the word 'iceberg' I am not necessarily indicating that one is near or predicting one is due. Rather the word may be used in the absence of that thing to bring it to mind for the purpose of discussion or as a comparison. The symbolic function of words is therefore intrinsic to something being a word for words do not, so to speak, arrive as self-identifying entities: no word is identical with that to which it refers. The relationship between words and that which they symbolise is a relationship based on convention and agreement, it is not a natural relationship such as that existing between lightning and thunder.

As the production of artefacts is an intentional action and given the necessary background beliefs and concepts for any intentional action to occur, then the production of artefacts is restricted to those beings who have the requisite beliefs and concepts. If I have no concept of self or time then how can *I* intend to do anything? We might put the matter in a slightly different way by saying that every action is based on a theory and is an expression of that theory. (Hence questions regarding theory and practice (for example in education) are not issues regarding how theory is to be integrated into practice for, in so far as anyone acts, the integration is unavoidable. It is about which theory is to be the one on which action is based and of which it is to be an expression).

Because intentional actions are future orientated they require the ability to represent to oneself a possible state of affairs which at present does not exist. This representation must then be in the form of symbols which can bring to the mind the elements of the future state of affairs in the absence of the actual elements themselves and the ability to do this is to be in possession of what we can call a language. (7)

Language therefore has a relationship to the production of artefacts which it does not have to the processes operating to form the natural physical world. However, artefacts are of many different sorts and this fact has implications for how they are related to language. Spears, guns and stereos are one kind of artefact but so are books, songs and plays. All artefacts will require

some form of physical manifestation and all artefacts will be dependent for their genesis on the existence of a language using species. In some artefacts the physical properties are most important e.g. a spear or gun, and although these are dependent on language users for their genesis they are not what we would call 'linguistically constituted' objects where 'constituted' refers to their actual composition; the removal of language still leaves the gun exactly as it was. Language is no part of the gun in the way of the metal of which it is made. The gun also, once produced, has a physical existence which is ontologically independent of human beings and language.

With other artefacts the position is different. If we take a poem or a novel then these need a physical manifestation e.g. a book or tape, but these physical properties are of less importance than the non-physical ones which involve the significance or meaning of the piece. Such artefacts are not only dependent on the existence of a language using species but are also 'linguistically constituted' items in that language is part of them in a way similar to the metal of the gun. Take away the metal and there is no gun, take away the language and there is no poem or play.

The argument above was to the effect that all artefacts are language dependent in the sense that their genesis is dependent upon the existence of a language using species but not all artefacts are linguistically constituted in the sense that language is an essential component of their make-up. This is an important distinction because it sets limits to what language can do in the social world in addition to the restrictions argued for in relation to the natural physical world. The notions of sense and reference can be usefully employed to illustrate the difference.

Sense and Reference

Using the distinction between sense and reference we can express the position as follows: in the case of the natural physical world the referent, the natural physical world, has an existence which is independent of any language which refers to it. In these cases language has no effect or purchase on the referent, the referent is not in any sense constituted by language. This does not however entail that language is a eunuch in such cases. What language can do is influence how we view the natural physical world, it can provide an orientation toward such a world. Language can operate to influence the sense something has for us; the way something presents

itself to us. Our attitudes, dispositions and thinking can be influenced by language; we can come to understand or approach something in a particular way. What language cannot do in such cases is alter the nature of the referent itself, whatever our orientation towards it.

For example, if we consider farming methods, then the scientific principles which govern the biological processes of growth will be unaffected by whatever language we employ to express our beliefs regarding how farming should be undertaken. The principles which govern the biology involved are formulated in a language but they are not dependent on that language such that by changing the language we could alter the principles themselves. What language can do is to influence the practices of farming by providing an orientation, by identifying a 'sense' or significance through the articulation of a set of beliefs, which brings us to act in some ways and not others. Farming practices can be influenced by the language we use even though the subject matter of farming, food production, is governed by principles whose operation have no ontological dependence on language.

The question which presents itself is whether language can be constitutive of not just sense but also reference. Are there cases where language can actually function to alter that to which it refers? If it can, then such things would be linguistically constituted in a strong sense for their nature would be (to some degree) a function of the language used in relation to them. Changing the way we talked about something would not be simply to adopt an attitude to something whose existence was independent of the language but to actively influence the constitution of the thing itself. I mentioned books and plays as artefacts which are linguistically constituted but these have the appearance of special cases; you couldn't have a book without language (apart from a picture book) although the 'book' itself is a clearly a physical object not a linguistic one. However, the argument to be developed in subsequent chapters will be that language can be constitutive of aspects of reality in a manner which extends beyond these fairly obvious cases. If it can be shown that there are instances where language influences or shapes not only the sense or significance that something may have for us but also the referent itself, then a stronger notion of linguistic constitution will be necessary.

From what has gone before it is clear that such cases won't be found in a realm of existence which is ontologically independent of language but will be located in areas of experience where language has a more creative role to play.

However, the distinction between different ontological types needs to be borne in mind: from the claim that language is essential for the existence of X, it does not follow that X is linguistically constituted in a strong sense. The production of stereo players is something only possible given creatures with a language but such artefacts are not linguistically constituted in the strong sense of referential malleability. Language may influence how I view stereo players but I can only turn one on by using the switch, my voice will not achieve this result (excepting voice controlled devices).

Claims that the social world is 'linguistically structured' sometimes ignore the obvious fact that the social world is also a physical world containing the products of the activities of language users but that the production of many of these artefacts involves working within constraints which language is powerless to influence or control. Language is going to be most influential when dealing with the non-physical properties rather than the physical for language itself can have no effect on latter. It is in the sphere of the non-physical properties, in issues of meaning, significance and interpretation, that language can mould or shape our understanding, experience and attitudes to aspects of the world.

The main purpose of this chapter has been to make some basic points regarding how language and reality might be related. The central claim is that the natural physical world exists independently of human beings and of any language they might develop. Language is limited in its relationship to this reality because it cannot influence the nature of the natural physical world; the natural physical world is ontologically independent of language. In terms of sense and reference, language can only influence the sense that the natural physical world has for us, it cannot affect the reference, that is, the nature of the natural physical world itself. This was termed the basic ontological constraint which operates on language in relation to the natural physical world. In the case of artefacts, the argument was that these are dependent for their existence on a language using species because their construction involves the notion of intentionality, which presupposes the possession of beliefs and that such things are only possible

given a language. Some artefacts e.g., guns and spears, are not linguistically constituted whereas others e.g., poems and books, are. The relationship between language, the natural physical world and artefacts is important for the later discussion of practices because a distinction will be made between practices whose subject matter is the natural world, those whose subject matter is the social world and how this influences the role which language can play within them. It is within the social world that language can play a more creative role, where it can be said to have a constitutive function such that the nature of that world is partly determined by the language we use.

NOTES

1. There is a distinction to be made between something being 'mind dependent' and 'language dependent': mental states are clearly mind dependent but not necessarily language dependent e.g. pains. Ontological objectivity implies external realism because it claims there is a world independent of human beings (hence human minds and representations) whereas external realism claims only that there is a world independent of all human representations which would allow for non-representational mental states to exist although the natural physical world would still seem to be independent of these (relatively primitive) mental states.

2. The use of the term 'solid' here is unaffected by any scientific arguments regarding whether solid objects are really 'solid' or not. In our everyday lives the notion of a solid object has a definitive meaning and, for practical purposes, can be contrasted with non-solid materials such as air or (liquid) water.

3. Goodman also runs together ontological and epistemological points. E.g. in his example of 'the visitor from a lifetime in the deepest jungle' he seems to argue that the visitors failure to *recognise* a stereo system (an epistemological claim) entails the ontological claim that the stereo system does not exist, '...he does not make out or make any such object' (Goodman ibid. : 33).

4. One only has to consider the gardens created by Capability Brown or the present condition of the Lake District.

5. The difficulties which face archaeologists when confronted with an object whose nature is unclear rests not in identifying the objects physical properties but the function or significance that it had for the original community.

6. In certain case actions may become habitualised so that the intentional component tends to fall away e.g. driving a car when engaged in a conversation or thinking of things other than the driving. In such cases however we can still claim that the driving itself was the result of intending to drive; that at some time previous I made a conscious decision to get in the car and drive.

7. It might be objected that the production of artefacts is not limited to humans but also appears in some higher primates. I see no difficulty with this; the term 'language user' does not have to be identical with 'human being' and it may well be that creatures closely related to humans, and especially those in close contact with humans, do develop a rudimentary language and the ability to make things. Typically the 'language' attributed to such animals is similar to that of a very young child and therefore it is not unusual that parallel types of behaviour may be exhibited. My main concern is with the role played by language in the activities of human beings who manifestly are creatures engaged in the production of artefacts and human practices.

CHAPTER THREE : THE CONSTITUTIVE NATURE OF LANGUAGE

Introduction

Charles Taylor claims that, 'Language does not only serve to describe or represent things. Rather there are some phenomena, central to human life, which are partly constituted by language' (Taylor 1985 : 270). The first sentence from Taylor recognises something that language does do, namely, it serves as a means of describing or representing features of the world. The second sentence suggests a further function for language where it somehow '...enters into some of the realities it is 'about' (ibid. : 273). In other words, in Taylor's opinion, language can be seen as constitutive of some aspects of reality. The phrase 'enters into' is important because it suggests something else is involved in the process, that language is, in some way, connected with or combined with something other than itself. Historically questions regarding how language is related to reality have broadly divided into two positions and it will be useful to briefly outline what these are.

At the most basic level we have 'language' and we have the 'world' or 'reality' and the problem is to provide an account of the relationship between the two. One possible solution is to see language as essentially fulfilling a representational role whereby it is connected to the world by means of some designative function. Language names or designates certain things or objects in the world and words have the meaning they do in virtue of their relationship to that which they so name or designate. Language is therefore 'anchored' in the world through this relationship. Such a view (at least at the first blush) ties in with a belief in an independently existing reality, of a world waiting for language to provide a categorisation through the naming of parts. This view of language as essentially naming that which exists independently of language, carries with it the assumption that the process of naming leaves that which is named as it was before. On this view language does not 'enter into some of the realities it is about' but simply labels what already exists. The designative relationship is fundamental in the sense that it is at this level that language connects to the world: all other uses of language are derivative of this basic relationship.

The other position, which can be termed 'inferentialism' , sees no necessary connection between language and some external reality: we have 'language' and the 'world' but language is not anchored to the world by a process of naming the constituents of the world. Brandom advocates an inferentialist account of the relationship between language and the world in contrast to the view, '...dominant since the Enlightenment, which takes *representation* as its basic concept' (Brandom 1997 : 155). As McDowell remarks, '...Brandom loftily dismisses the idea of semantic relaions between words and elements of extra-linguistic reality' (McDowell 1997 : 158). By the term 'inferentialism' Brandom means the idea that the 'basic semantic concept' (Brandom op. cit. : 155) is that words acquire meaning by means of being grounded in a set of relationships within language (inferential ones) and not through a set of relations between language and something outside language.

On this account, words do not acquire a meaning by standing for objects in the world but via their relationships with other words. Language on this view is a far more self-contained system where words acquire meaning not through reference to some external reality but from their position in a linguistic nexus. There is no anchor for language outside of language; language, in some sense, anchors itself. Such a view may seem to avoid some of the problems that a representationalist position encounters when faced with language use which seems resistant to a reductive analysis culminating in a naming relationship to an external reality e.g., complex conditional sentences.

However, it runs the risk of language 'loosing contact with the world', of language '...trading its solidity for a froth of words' (Brandom quoted by Rorty. Rorty 1997 : 173). The problem is that if we attempt to anchor language within itself what guarantees do we have that the meanings we ascribe to words bear any relationship to 'how things are in the world'?

Taylor offers a possible way out of this dichotomy through an account which attempts to combine language and reality in a manner which makes language partly constitutive of aspects of reality yet avoids the problems of a slide into linguistic idealism associated with the inferentialist position. However, as was argued in Chapter 2, there is a fundamental sense in which language must be representational, a sense which arises simply from the nature of words themselves.

Words stand for *something* or refer to *something* or signify *something,* or mean *something.* Words as marks or sounds are more than the marks or sounds we use to make them, they are marks or sounds which have a significance beyond the physical properties of those marks or sounds, otherwise they would be no different from the marks on a pebble or the sound of the wind. This notion of words signifying something beyond themselves is prior to any account of how they achieve this signification, for this question only arises given that words do possess the property of signification.

The positions outlined above - representationalism and inferentialism - therefore represent two attempts to account for the power of words to mean something: one claims that this is via a process which anchors words in the world, the other via a process which anchors words to other words. The inferentialist position cannot be that words do not make reference to anything but rather an attempt to account for what it is that they do make reference to. Or, to put it another way, on a representationalist account, words acquire meaning by being linked to objects in the world through a naming relationship. On an inferentialist account words acquire meaning by standing in a certain relationship to other words but to have meaning they must still signify something beyond themselves, that is, stand for, something else. This primitive representational aspect of words is intrinsic to their nature.

In what follows I intend to begin by making some general remarks regarding the different ways in which language may be related to the world and human activities. I then take two philosophers as representative of the opposing positions outlined above: Locke for the representationalist perspective and Foucault for the inferentialist. The discussion is aimed at setting up two polar accounts of the relationship between language and the world which, whilst attracting few disciples in their pure form, nevertheless illustrate general approaches which, suitably modified, are not without contemporary weight. There then follows an extended analysis of Taylor's views and their relevance to the present inquiry. Taylors position is then further developed through an anlysis of 'linguistic categorisation'.

As was claimed in Chapter 2, there is a difference between claiming that 'X is necessary for Y to exist' and claiming that 'Y is, to some degree or another, constituted by X'. Many things

only exist because they have been brought into existence by other things but once in existence their manifestations have no components which are identifiable with that which was instrumental in their genesis. Cars, coffee tables, ceramics and other artefacts (as opposed to any physically similar chance creations of natural forces) are the products of human activity and without this activity would not exist. They do not however contain any human components, they are entirely composed of inert matter; once brought into being, they would still be what they are in the absence of humans. Debating societies, courts of justice and cricket teams need human components for them to be what they are; once established cricket teams do not have an existence independent of human beings but are dependent on them for their continued existence.

In the case of language we need to distinguish between those things which are not dependent on language for their existence and, hence, have no linguistic components, e.g., stars, rivers, sharks, trees etc., and those things which are dependent on language for their genesis but have no linguistic components, e.g., cars, guns, bridges, etc., and those things which are both dependent on language for their genesis and have linguistic components e.g., poetry, speech, promises or oaths.

We might express the position slightly differently in terms of human activities. There are some human activities which require no use of language and existed before language appeared, for example, eating, procreation, sleeping, walking etc. You do not need a language to engage in these activities. There are other human activities which would not have appeared without a language but are not primarily linguistic in nature e.g., playing football, installing double glazing or driving a car. A third group would be activities which are dependent on language for their genesis and where language is a component of the activity. This third group can be sub-divided into uses of language which only provide a means by which the activity proceeds and those where the use of language has a direct influence on how the process proceeds.

In the first sub-division would be cases where the use of language was necessary for effective communication regarding some activity although the activity itself was not directly affected by the language. For example, explaining to someone how to wire a plug will involve the use of language (spoken, written or even through diagrams) although wiring a plug not a linguistic

activity but a manual one. The wiring of a plug is not effected by the use of language but by actions of a different order, namely practical ones. The second sub-division will be activities which require language for their genesis, use language in their execution and are directly affected by the language used. An example would be the forming of personal relationships: here language is an essential part of the process but it does not operate at one step removed from the process itself (as in the case of wiring a plug) because the language actively influences the development of the relationship. (This is not to say that personal relationships may not develop between people who are mute but then there must be *some* form of communication operating and the emergent relationship will be influenced by the nature of the communication between those involved). In forming personal relationships how language is used becomes extremely important, it is not simply what is said but how what is said is said that contributes to the nature of the evolving relationship.

Given this structure we can see how language can operate in different ways, from providing a background against which various human activities become possible e.g., playing football, to areas of life where it may be said to influence and mould the nature of the activity directly e.g., forming personal relationships. If we claim that the social world is 'linguistically structured' or that 'language is constitutive of social reality' we need to be clear about what exactly such claims amount to. One danger of providing philosophical accounts of the relationship between 'language' and the 'world' is the temptation to impose one account as applicable to all cases; to provide a universal theory. Attempts at this to be found in, for example, the early Wittgenstein and, from a different perspective, Foucault. The position adopted will, not unnaturally, reflect a belief in the suitability of some paradigm case from which all other uses of language can be shown to be either derivatives or deviants. As it stands, the question of how 'language relates to the world' fails to specify which parts of the world we are concerned with - or perhaps assumes that one account is going to cover all the possible relationships. It also suggests a rather monolithic notion of 'language' as if language only ever functioned in one mode or that all modes are reducible to a fundamental mechanism.

I intend to examine this issue by making a fairly crude distinction between the two different models outlined at the beginning of the chapter of how language might be related to the world and then by developing a more nuanced account.

Locke's account of language

One view of the relationship between language and the world might be that language is essentially a process of applying words or 'tags' to the things which we find in the world. What language enables us to do is use the words as a means of making reference to certain entities so that we can communicate with others and engage in thought processes. Language, on this view, is basically a labelling process. A central feature of any such process will be that the labelling does not effect that which is labelled, just as putting price tags on goods does not have any effect on the goods themselves. The motivation for such a theory is not hard to find for one of the functions which language has is precisely of this kind. We use words such as 'tree', 'cat', 'house' etc., as a means of making reference to objects in the world around us. We might be also be inclined to believe that this is the primary use of language; that language is fundamentally a naming process. Children's first words are usually the names of familiar objects because their parents have taught them how to name such objects. Children do not usually begin their vocabulary by using words such as 'existential', 'obligation' or 'hysteresis'.

Locke's account of language constitutes one version of a labelling theory. In Book Three of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Locke puts forward the view that 'words' are essentially a way of making reference to ideas, 'The use...of words is to be sensible marks of *ideas,* and the *ideas* they stand for are their proper or immediate signification' (Locke 1974 III, ii, 1). And, '*...words, in their primary or immediate signification, stand for nothing but the* ideas *in the mind of him that uses them..*' (ibid. III, ii, 2). The association between words and ideas is not by any 'natural connection' ('...for then there would be but one language amongst all men...') but through a voluntary act which all speakers have to perform. Each individual is responsible for this connecting of words and ideas and, because each person's ideas are their own, any attempt to impose an association in the mind of an individual is contradictory for

then they would be '...signs and not signs of his *ideas* at the same time, and so in effect to have no signification at all' (ibid. : III, ii, 2).

For Locke, language had two main purposes, namely, the recording of our own thoughts and the communicating of our thoughts to others (ibid. : III, ix, 1). Locke was aware of the way that language could be used improperly and this, combined with his semantic individualism, made it imperative that speakers took great care in their use of language and took notice of, '...those who in their writings and discourses appear to have had the clearest notions, and applied to them their terms with the exactest choice and fitness' (Ibid. : III, xi, 11). This is a weak attempt to impose some social control on the use of language, hence Locke's strictures on the need for speakers to apply their words, '...as near as may be *to such* ideas *as common use has annexed them to* ' (ibid. : III, xi, 11).

The tensions between common use and individual freedom to determine use constitute a problem for Locke to which it is difficult to see any satisfactory solution; which is to have priority? If common usage reigns then the acts of individual free association are pointless and the basis of Locke's position rendered redundant. If individual association is the master, then the process of communication is reduced to chance for each is free to make words signify whatever he or she wishes.

Locke's views on language have been widely criticised although some argue that the subtly of his position is often insufficiently appreciated and that his main concern was with not with all words but only nouns and adjectives or 'names' (Kretzmann 1977). He does, however, advocate a view of language which, in its essence, constitutes a labelling theory. Words stand for or signify ideas in the mind of the speaker and what words mean is decided upon by each individual through a voluntary act of association, '... every man has so inviolable a liberty to make words stand for what ideas he pleases' (ibid. : III, ii, 8). (There are echoes here of Locke's political liberalism for, just as in politics, where each individual must take responsibility for his actions, so in language each speaker acts within a framework of liberty and responsibility where the duty is to preserve language as an effective means of communication). (1).

Words appear at the end of a chain of events and are attached to certain mental entities - ideas - which must exist prior to their being associated with particular words. As labels for ideas, words have a passive role to play: their main function is to enable reference to that which already exists. Although Locke acknowledges the role played by other language users as a regulatory principle in the 'correct' use of words, linguistic social intercourse consists of individuals, who have created a language for themselves by a process of voluntary association, using that language in a social context. Language is a labelling system but it is also an individual labelling system. For Locke this is not just a fact of psychology but has the character of a moral imperative which recognises a right to liberty. The 'social' aspects of language are primarily concerned with the correct use of an already possessed faculty, a faculty which has been acquired on an individual basis. It is rather like cricket players of average ability attending a coaching school where they can refine the talents they already have. Their rudimentary skills are already in place having been self-taught.

There are several problems with Locke's position, e.g., how does the principle of association work, what exactly is an 'idea' in Locke's sense, what range of words is the theory intended to cover? However, my purpose in using Locke's account is mainly to stress that it is a labelling theory of language and one which sees the acquisition of language as a purely individual affair. Alive to the possible distorting effects of language, Locke sees clear, effective communication as the primary function of language: '...communication, which is the chief end of language' (ibid. : III, v, 7).

It is ironic that Locke's concern with the improvement of effective communication is to be facilitated by theory whose emphasis on the idiosyncratic mental life of participants makes the whole issue of communication problematic. Freedom to apply words to ideas in a purely personal fashion has a double bind for not only may people's ideas be different but they can also apply different words to their different ideas. Communication therefore becomes a difficult task for why should I assume that anyone will understand what I say?

That Locke's psychology was defective does not entail that his concern for the communicative aspect of language is equally misguided. The role of language as a means of communication is central to any adequate account but Locke seems overly concerned with what might be called

the transactional aspects of communication namely, those where the effective transmission of information, knowledge, thoughts etc., is the prime purpose. In Locke's account, language is a means by which we (almost literally) 'keep tabs' on certain elements of consciousness and convey our thoughts to others. Language does not actively alter or influence the contents of consciousness but enables the mind to monitor the various associations taking place.

The method of individual voluntary association radically underplays the social nature of language acquisition and the extent to which the meaning of words is socially determined. Locke's view is naive in that it envisages a rather straightforward connection between language, the individual and the world. Whilst Locke's psychology would find few supporters today, elements of the labelling theory of language persist in different forms. A moments reflection indicates that labelling itself is not always a neutral process but can have significant subsequent effects. On Locke's theory these effects are always contingent because the meaning any word has is determined by individual acts of association not by reference to common usage. Language does label but it also has other functions.

As is well-known, Locke was powerfully influenced by the growth of science and in particular the work of Boyle and Newton (Yolton 1977 : 31). Their concern with understanding the nature of the natural physical world had a significant influence on Locke's account of language. Despite is flaws, Locke's theory *seems* most plausible as an account of the relationship between language and the natural physical world. The natural physical world is ontologically independent of human beings as are the material products of human endeavour. These can then act as a source for impressions which enter the mind, become ideas and can then be labelled with words. Kretzmann's claim that Locke was principally concerned with nouns and adjectives (names) lends some credence to this. Language was acquired through the naming of physical objects and their properties via the impressions and ideas they caused in the mind. Because the objects exist independently of human beings and language the role of language in regards to them is passive and non-constitutive: language does not partake in the formation of these objects or constitute any part of them.

If Locke's theory is located at one end of the spectrum then at the opposite will be an account which sees language not simply as a means of tagging ideas but as something which is actively

involved in the production of ideas and has creative force. A statement of such an alternative view is to be found in Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (A.K.) (Foucault 1972).

Foucault's account of language

Foucault's aim in this book is simply stated; it is to '...describe the relations between statements' (A.K. : 31). I do not intend to provide a detailed analysis of this work but highlight Foucault's central ideas regarding the relationship between language and human affairs and their relevance to the present inquiry. The main task in the Archaeology is to provide an account of 'discursive events' which is *purely descriptive.* On page 27 he states, 'One is led ...to the project of a *pure description of discursive events.*' (2) The desire for a 'pure description' of discursive events is the key to understanding the work as a whole. The project starts by calling into question the traditional categories of human inquiry - science, literature, the humanities etc. - on the basis that what is normally thought to unite such disciplines and give them unity is unsatisfactory. Foucault considers and rejects possible unifying criteria such as reference to a common object, use of common concepts, persistence of themes and a 'certain constant manner of statement' (A.K. : 32-36). Once these traditional categories (grouping principles) are suspended we are left with a field which is made up of the '...totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written) in their dispersion as events and in the occurrence which is proper to them' (A.K. : 27). It is the analysis of these 'effective statements' or 'raw data' which is the project of the archaeological method for it is only through investigating them that the true structure of the inquiries can be discovered.

The archaeologist concerns himself *only* with the analysis of these effective statements: at all times he '...remains within the dimension of discourse' (A.K. : 76). It is by this method that the 'purity' of the process is achieved and preserved; Foucault rejects any attempt to include in his analysis references to what speakers may *think* or *mean* by what they say: the method of archaeology is one '...purged of all anthropologism' (A.K. : 16). The object of analysis is the statements themselves. As Dreyfus and Rabinow somewhat obliquely remark:

> **Foucault is not interested in recovering man's unnoticed everyday self-interpretation...Such an act of interpretation "dooms us to an endless task...[because it] rests on the postulate that speech is an act of 'translation' ...an exegesis which listens...to the Word of God, ever secret, ever beyond itself."**
>
> **(Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982 : xix)**

The archaeological method is radical in rejecting any reference to whatever meaning statements may have for their authors and to any background practices - indeed the notions of 'meaning' and 'truth' are dispensable for the statements are treated as free standing objects of analysis. The analyst adopts a phenomenological, 'orthogonal' relationship to that which is studied. In Locke the individual association of word and idea was what gave words meaning but in Foucault individuals and their 'meanings' fall completely out of the picture.

Foucault replaces the notion of a traditional discipline with that of a 'discursive formation.' In a discursive formation we have a 'system of dispersion' in which the various elements comprising the discursive formation are located according to certain 'rules of formation.' These rules govern the formation of objects, concepts, strategies and enunciative modalities:

> **With the unity of a discourse like that of clinical medicine...we are dealing with a dispersion of elements. This dispersion itself... can be described in its uniqueness if one is able to determine the specific rules in accordance with which its objects, statements, concepts, and theoretical options have been formed...**
>
> **(A.K. : 72)**

The question Foucault wants to investigate is 'How are language and practice related?' Any practice e.g., medicine, science, education, will consist of a discourse and particular actions (what Foucault terms 'non-discursive events') so how are the two connected? Foucault is interesting because he provides a distinctive answer.

Discourse always has priority over practice. Discursive formations are the determining factors in human practices: discourses are what unifies, shapes and gives purpose to practices. If we consider the relationship between language and practice as between 'words' and 'things', then words are trumps every time. Foucault argues that we must resist the temptation of seeing language in terms of referents and of words 'pointing to things'. The task of archaeology is not that of, '... treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (A.K. : 49).

We must,

> ...substitute for the enigmatic treasure of 'things' anterior to discourse, the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse. To define these objects without reference to the ground, the foundation of things, but by relating them to a body of rules that enable them to form as objects of discourse.
>
> (A.K. : 47-48)

This is the opposite of Locke's position. Whereas for Locke language, or words, named things which existed anterior to it (ideas), Foucault sees language as bringing objects into existence. Language has the capacity to form the objects of which it speaks. If objects have no existence anterior to language then this explains why Foucault rejected the idea that a focus on a similar objects can act as a unifying principle for a discipline: any object only exists as a consequence of the discursive formation and, therefore, cannot act as an independently existing feature prior to the establishment of a discursive formation. On page 30 of the Archaeology, Foucault includes a caveat to the effect that although he will take psychopathology, medicine, politics - the 'human sciences' - as his material, '...the analysis of discursive events is in no way limited to such a field.' The archaeological method is intended to apply to *all* areas of inquiry not just to those where such a perspective might seem to have some plausibility e.g., psychiatry (to take one of Foucault's favoured disciplines). The

archaeological method has universal application, it provides a method of analysis applicable to all areas of inquiry.

Foucault's claims for language are strong. It is not simply that language is needed to make a practice intelligible (in the way that language is necessary for the understanding of, say, the manufacture of certain artefacts or being a traffic warden) but rather that language unifies a whole system of individual practices and that it is only within this discursive unity that any educational, medical, political or scientific actions have a coherence or purpose. There are clear difficulties with this not least the need for some practice or other to be in existence which can become the site of the establishment of a discursive formation. (A problem similar to that encountered by Marx in his claim that consciousness arose from material practice for without some form of consciousness material practice is impossible).

As regards the formation of objects, Foucault distinguishes between 'objects' and 'concepts' so he is not using 'object' where he means 'concept'. In relation to the objects with which various practices deal, e.g., plants for botanists, rocks for geologists etc., this is simply an ontological mistake. Such things are not brought into existence by the language of botanists or geologists but exist 'anterior to discourse' and 'point to things' in the world. The best explanation for the use of language in relation to such objects is that language does not bring these things into existence but identifies and categorises existing properties of the objects.

(Foucault is not unique in taking discourses as constituting the objects of which they speak. Eagleton identifies a similar position in the work of the sociologists Hirst and Hindness who see objects as '...wholly internal to [such] discourses, constituted by them through and through.') (Eagleton 1990 : 203).

If discourse is given this omnipotence then it is only sensible to concentrate on it for it constitutes the prime determinant in shaping human practices. However, there are problems with such an approach.

It suggests that the nature of practices can be changed by simply changing the language or discourse used in relation to such practices. Now, as will be argued in later chapters, there is a good degree of truth in this but stated in Foucault's terms, it overemphasises the extent to which practices can be changed simply by linguistic means and fails to properly understand

how language and practice are related. Practices can be shaped by language but they are not the infinitely linguistically malleable things that Foucault's position suggests. How we categorise the world is important but if we include weed killer in the group of potable soft drinks our linguistic changes will not reduce its effects on our health. All practices are constrained to some degree or other by features of their subject matter - what they deal with or are about. The role of language in relation to a practice is partly determined by the nature of its subject matter and this is something which Foucault's desire to provide a universal theory of practices forces him to ignore. (These issues are further discussed in chapter 5).

The central difficulty for Foucault is that he never is able to give a coherent explanation of the relationship between discursive and non-discursive events. This is evident in his account of the rules which govern discursive formations. The celestial position adopted by the archaeologist leads Foucault to reject the need to ground the discursive in a non-discursive background for such a move would undermine the claims of discourse to both priority and autonomy over the non-discursive. The 'rules' which govern the dispersion of statements have a somewhat obscure, not to say schizophrenic existence. It is not clear whether the rules which 'govern' discursive formations are causal or where they reside,

> ...the rules of the formation operate not only in the mind or consciousness of individuals, but in discourse itself: they operate...according to a sort of uniform anonymity, on all individuals who undertake to speak in the discursive field.
>
> (A.K : 63)

In other places he speaks as if the rules exist only at the level of discourse, '...we must discover the law operating behind all these diverse statements' (A.K. : 50). On the one hand the rules seem to be present in the minds of the practitioners but unknown to them (anonymous) and on the other they exist only at the level of statements. To be true to the archaeological method, Foucault should concern himself only with statements as they present themselves: the 'raw data'. The causes of the appearance of these statements within disciplines is of no concern to

the archaeologist for this would be to move beyond the realm of discourse into the murky world of meaning and significance. The rules must reside at the discursive level otherwise the whole project is defeated. In fact Foucault is contravening the archaeological method if he attempts to do anything other than simply *describe* the occurrence of statements within a discursive formation.

Tensions arise because Foucault continually transgresses his own stipulations for the correct method of analysis. He is drawn between the search for a universal, pure methodology - 'the pure descriptive analysis of discourse' - and a desire to 'dirty his hands' in close examinations of the workings of particular disciplines. In effect he oscillates between description and wanting to provide explanations of various phenomena, 'One must show why [a specific statement] could not have been other than it was' (Foucault quoted by Rabinow & Dreyfuss 1982 : 84). Such an explanation of 'why a statement could not have been other than it was', must make reference to the context in which the statement was produced but such a move is to fall foul of the methodology of the archaeological project.

The rules 'governing' the discursive formations have to be at the discursive level otherwise they could not claim the autonomy necessary to be objects of analysis in their own right, but at this level *all* that exist are statements. What then regulates or governs the dispersion of these statements? Foucault is unclear on this and it is arguable that from the perspective of the archaeology such a question is otiose. All Foucault needs to do is *describe* the changing discursive practices, he does not need to provide some explanation for these changes. This however simply brings into stark relief the full implications of his methodology.

How is a statement to be understood given that the same statement can mean different things in different contexts? How are important statements differentiated from the trivial or meaningless? Once the archaeologist is divorced for the background in which statements acquire their meaning or significance he has no way of answering such questions. The archaeologist is left to map the distribution of statements is an entirely positivistic manner, simply logging the occurrence of statements. 'Significance' can mean nothing more than frequency of appearance but we do not usually judge how significant a statement is by the number of times it appears (although such a technique of repetition is often used by various

groups to create an aura of significance for certain claims). But the situation is even worse for without any background how can the archaeologist even know that one statement is identical with another and hence to be logged under a particular category?

The failure is acknowledges by Foucault himself, '...my discourse, far from determining the locus of which it speaks, is avoiding the ground on which it could find support' (A.K. : 205).

One implication which arises from the archaeological method is a permissive relativism where all discursive formations are treated equally. For example, in the case of ideology he comments that we must treat 'ideological functioning' as '...one practice amongst others...the question of ideology ...is ...of its existence as a discursive practice and of its functioning among other practices' (A.K. : 185-186). Thus, there are no distinctions to be drawn amongst discourses in terms of what we might term their warrantability or legitimacy and therefore all the important questions we could ask regarding their status in these areas are ruled out. We have in essence to abandon all claims to 'seriousness' and retreat to a position which is mute in relation to all issues of social significance.

It would be a mistake to see the Archaeology as without value. Many of Foucault's observations on how practices work e.g., in his discussion of 'enunciative modalities' - that which gives statements authority or 'clout' within a practice - are perceptive and informative. However, these positive aspects need to be divorced from the project of the book as a whole and seem to grow in importance in proportion to the extent that they diverge from the putative methodology of the work. If we are less ambitious and don't insist on taking up an orthogonal, detached, elevated position from the human affairs we wish to investigate and recognise that not all such affairs should be lumped together as one activity capable of an analysis which is both universal and illuminating, then Foucault's position (or what is left of it) has some merit.

He is correct in realising that the role of language in human practices is more than simply a mechanism for 'keeping tags' on what goes on but can actively influence and mould what goes on. His failure is to give an account of how language and social activity are related which adequately conceptualises the relationship. He sees that language can be constitutive of practices but assigns to it a role so abstracted from the practices (and practitioners) themselves

as to give the impression of an imperious force which rules over both, determining their activities with little or any cognisance on the agents part that this is happening. Discourse, he writes, '...is not the majestically unfolding of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined' (A.K. : 55). It depends on how 'determined' is being used here; is it in the sense of 'brought about or caused' or 'able to be discerned'? The thrust of Foucault's position would suggest the former interpretation with discourse playing a major role in moulding or shaping the nature of the self. In some situations such a view has plausibility but when applied as a universal claim about all discourses it is less convincing. Some discourses may influence the nature of the self more than others but if we are faithful to the principles of the Archaeology, such issues are irrelevant for the archaeologist eschews all references to the nature of agents themselves.

The Archaeology can be seen as an attempt to highlight the role that language plays in human affairs by rejecting the notion that language is merely the handmaiden of disciplines, a chronicler or minute-taker of affairs with no active part to play in the development or nature of those affairs. As such it is of some importance as a constitutive model of language. Its methodological failure stems from trying to provide too ambitious a role for language, a role which fails to adequately recognises either the nature of different practices and the inter-relationship which exists between language and actions within practices.

Despite their theoretical shortcomings there are elements in both Locke and Foucault that have merit. Locke is correct in seeing that language has an important representative function just as Foucault is right to emphasise the constitutive role which language can play. Their problems arise from a desire to universalise a partial truth without due cognisance of the different modes in which language can operate. Language can be constitutive of aspects of reality but not all aspects of reality. Language fulfils a representative function but not all language use is representational. What is needed is a more nuanced account of how language and reality might be connected.

Re-Thinking the Relationship between Language and The World

The thought that language serves primarily a representational function is strong and borne out in much of our everyday experiences but are there, as Taylor believes, ways in which language, '...enters into some of the realities it is 'about'? (Taylor 1985 : 273). Taylor's caveat 'some' is important because it signals an acknowledgement that not everything is shot through and through by language. Whatever the origins of language there was clearly a time when its use was primitive or rudimentary, perhaps limited to serving certain basic biological urges such as the need for food, safety or procreation. Over time it has 'broken free' from such constraints and facilitated the acquisition of what might be termed 'higher' qualities e.g., the establishment of value systems, intellectual inquiry, social relationships and practices. Taylor argues that such higher qualities are both 'carried' by language in the sense that language makes them possible, and also, to some extent, constituted by language (Taylor 1985, 1991 & 1992). Drawing particularly on the work of Herder, Taylor develops an account of language which aims to show how it makes possible various human relationships and dispositions which are unable to be engaged in by non-language users and insufficiently capturable by philosophical theories which are wedded to a representative perspective (see esp. Taylor 1985 : 248-292).

Taylor's position centres around two key notions: the idea of 'irreducible rightness' and the constitutive role of language.

'Irreducible rightness', (which he also calls 'semantic non-reducibility') is an attempt to counter any accounts of language which seek to explain its use in terms of non-linguistic criteria. Non-language users can learn to respond in an appropriate manner to some object or event - a red square or a whistle - and in the wild, animals can seek food, hide from a predator, seek a mate etc. In such cases the 'right' thing to do can be defined in terms of achieving some end namely, finding food, shelter or a mate. The rightness of the response is judged in terms of how successfully it achieves the desired goal. Animals, or non-language users, can make right or wrong responses to elements in their environment, where 'right' and 'wrong' are determined by reference to the satisfaction, or not, of some want or need; rightness consists in these cases of bringing about some state of affairs, crucially achieving success in, '...some non-linguistically-defined purpose or task' (Taylor 1991 : 45). There is also a notion of 'rightness'

in language, of using the right word but, claims Taylor, this notion of rightness is qualitatively different from the one applicable to the success in the examples mentioned above and cannot be reduced to a 'task-rightness' description:

> Using the right word involves identifying an object as having the properties that justify using that word. We cannot give an account of this rightness in terms of extra linguistic purposes. Rightness here is irreducible to success in some extra-linguistic task.
>
> (Taylor 1992 : 249)

In the case of non-language users, the right response is that which achieves the desired end and the response *is* the right response *because* it achieves the desired end; achievement of the end is criterial as to whether it was the right response. In the case of making the right response in language - coming up with the right word - the response is not right *because* it brings about some state of affairs, it brings about some state of affairs *because* it is the right response. Taylor offers as an illustrative example our understanding of the word 'envy' (Taylor 1992 : 250).

In the case of 'envy' he argues that if I 'hit on the right word' to articulate and clarify my feelings, acknowledging that I am motivated by envy, then the term,

> ...does its work because it is the right term ...we cannot explain the rightness of the word "envy" here simply in terms of the condition that using it produces; rather, we have to account for its producing this condition... in terms of being the right word'...Language does not simply report the feelings I may have but when I come up with a word to articulate my feelings I also *shape* them in a certain manner.
>
> (ibid. : 250)

That is, language does not simply passively label what is already present but can alter, influence or shape that which is already there.

Thus, the criterial locus for correct language use is different from non-language use because in the former, the rightness is not, so to speak, judged after the fact, that is, in terms of success in some non-linguistic task, but resides before the fact in the choice of the right word - the word which will 'do the required work.' Rightness is not a correlation between signals and behaviour but a '...question of subjective understanding, of what rightness consists in ... To be a linguistic creature is to be sensitive to irreducible issues of rightness' (Taylor 1991 : 46).

Irreducible rightness is thus central, in Taylor's view, to being a language user and signals the 'breaking free' of language from its primitive roots into a sphere which enables the higher qualities to emerge. Once at a certain stage language facilitates the production of, '...new kinds of relations...it makes possible value in the strong sense...only language users can identify things as *worthy* of desire ...For such identifications raise issues of intrinsic rightness' (Taylor 1992 : 251).

He writes:

> It (language) may also open up new ways of responding to things, of feeling. If in expressing our own thoughts about things, we can come to have new thoughts, then in expressing our feelings we can come to have new feelings.
>
> (Taylor 1991 : 60). (3)

In these passages Taylor is in fact running together his two central ideas of irreducible rightness and a constitutive account of language and they are not the same. Taylor seems to move from arguing that language use requires a notion of irreducible rightness, that is, the view that picking out the 'right word' cannot be accounted for simply in terms of success in some extra-linguistic task but involves '...being able to grasp something *as* what it is' (Taylor 1992 : 249) to the claim that coming up with the right word to articulate my feelings enables me to '...at the same time shape them in a certain manner' (ibid. : 250).

Now this is to move beyond the notion of irreducible rightness itself and brings in the constitutive account of language. Recognising something as what it is does not itself entail a constitutive view of language. For example, if I point and say 'kestrel' this is because I 'grasp' the thing in the sky for what it is and identify the bird as, '..having the properties which justify using that word' (ibid. : 249). However, such an act has no effect on the kestrel, it does not shape or mould anything in the world. It need not even relate to my feelings towards the bird; I may not have any feelings towards kestrels.

The notion or irreducible rightness needs to be distinguished from another kind of rightness which could be termed 'semantic rightness'. Taylor does not use the term 'semantic rightness' (or an equivalent) and only makes passing references to a notion of rightness which is other than irreducible rightness but the distinction is absolutely crucial for understanding the ways in which language can function.

If I claim that there is a cat in the garden, then I commit myself to the truth of that claim. There is a normative element involved because if there were no cat in the garden then I would need to modify my claim. The claim involves semantic rightness because it is the right claim to make given that I believe there to be a cat in the garden. Whether or-not the claim is true will depend upon whether there is a cat in the garden, that is, I commit myself to a claim the truth of which is independent of my commitment. If I change my mind about the presence of felines in the garden this, of itself, will have no effect on whether there are or are not any. My commitment is to something the rightness of which is independent of my making the claim.

In the case of feeling such as envy (and one could add 'indignation', 'resentment', 'self-pity' etc.) the notion of semantic rightness must still apply. I have a feeling which I identify as 'envy': I then claim to be feeling envious - 'I am envious' - and there must be a commitment on my part that these words are the right words to express how I am feeling given that I am not engaged in some self-deception or confused. Taylor's argument is for a notion of rightness which goes beyond the truthful communication of my feelings (semantic rightness) namely, that coming up with the right word in this case serves an additional purpose. The word 'envy' not only conveys my feelings but also can affect my emotional state by shaping it in a certain way. Now this is to bring in the additional element of language being constitutive. In certain

situations the right word does more than just describe, it shapes but in other situations it just describes and does no shaping of anything. What Taylor seems to have in mind is something like this (I say 'seems' because I find his exposition somewhat cursory on the detail).

I have a feeling which at first I may be unsure about. I introspect on my feeling and identify it as envy, this act fulfils two purposes. First it enables me to correctly express my feelings - to use the right words so I don't say 'I am feeling elated' or 'I am feeling irritable', that is, I fulfil the semantic rightness condition. But in addition coming up with the term 'envy' serves to further clarify and refine my feelings, it enables me to categorise my feelings as envy and thus make a distinction between these feelings and other feelings I might experience. They are *shaped* by this act because coming up with the right word is what enables me to see them for what they are and locate them within the nexus of what could be called my emotional lexicon. If this is envy then it is related to other feelings and its source, 'Why am I feeling envious?' will need to be located in a particular set of circumstances within which being envious makes sense. On reflection I may feel my envy is unjustified and therefore stop feeling envious (there is always the difficulty with emotions that some are often short-lived), maybe I will feel ashamed that I was envious but this clarification of my feelings is only possible through coming up with 'envy' as the right word to describe the feelings I initially had. The word 'envy' carries various connotations e.g., dissatisfaction, resentment, desire, and it is through being able to tap into these related elements that my own feelings can be analysed more perspicaciously and hence what was a rather vague feeling, become more clearly defined.

This notion of rightness, of coming up with the right word, can therefore alter what I am experiencing by placing it within a wider emotional lexicon. Language enables me to have a clearer understanding of my feelings and thus able to effect changes in those feelings. Such a process is only available to language users and, certainly in the case of envy, language users who have reached a certain level of development. Such an activity is 'irreducible' precisely because it occurs within language or what Taylor terms 'the semantic dimension'. Whereas the 'cat in the garden' example contained only the notion of semantic rightness because the reference of the claim would be unaffected by my making the claim, in the second case, actually making the claim can affect the reference of the claim and what effects this change in

the reference is coming up with the right word. If the reference is changed then so is my sense of the reference. This, in a case like 'envy', seems almost simultaneous with the change in reference for as my experience alters so will my understanding of that experience: the sense that the experience has for me is inevitably altered by the change in the experience.

Taylor does not distinguish explicitly between these two notions of rightness although he is clear enough in stating that the use of language he is concerned with are those which relate, broadly, to the social world rather than the natural physical, 'the cosmos' (Taylor 1992 : 252). Semantic rightness would appear to be a feature of all intelligible language use, even those when the use of language might be convoluted or obscure, e.g., metaphor or irony. However in some cases irreducible rightness seems to be simply a case of semantic rightness; an instance of using the right word e.g., the case of the kestrel. If irreducible rightness always operated as Taylor describes in the case of envy, then all language use would be constitutive because coming up with the right word would shape or mould whatever the word referred to. This would entail that using the right word about features of the physical world produced some change in those features -moulded or shaped them - as it does in the case of envy and this is to be drawn into a kind of linguistic idealism. Taylor's position needs to be adapted to avoid such a consequence.

Irreducible rightness (semantic non-reducibility) is a feature of language use to be differentiated from the behaviour that non-language users may display in response to some stimulus. It requires that language users 'grasp things for what they are' which means that they can appreciate that something has the properties which justify the use of a particular word. This is a feature of all correct language use and is what I termed semantic rightness. Taylor's more interesting claim is that, in certain situations, coming up with the right word does more than fulfil the semantic rightness condition but also shapes or moulds that which it is about - 'enters into the reality of what it is 'about'.

This is to invoke the constitutive element. Semantic rightness operates in all cases but the constitutive element does not. Irreducible rightness, in the case of envy for example, seems to be equivalent to 'semantic rightness + constitutiveness'. Taylor's position is that in some cases coming up with the right word does more than simply describe or refer but effects a

clarification and shaping which leaves the state of affairs other than it would have been had the right word not been brought to mind, that is, the right word makes a difference. If it makes a difference to what I am experiencing then it has shaped or moulded what I am feeling and to refer to such a process as rendering language 'constitutive' seems perfectly legitimate. 'Envy' is certainly an emotion only available to language users because it requires the existence of a set of beliefs and attitudes held in some conceptual scheme. The word 'does its work' because it enables me to locate the feelings I am having within this larger nexus which results in a more perspicacious understanding of those feelings.

What this account does is to combine together language and reality (an emotional reality in the case of envy) in a way which avoids the representationalist/coherentist dichotomy discussed at the beginning of the chapter. Taylor's insight (suitably modified) is to give an account of language and reality which links the two intimately together. Language is not *simply* referring to something which already exists as in the representationalist case, nor is it operating purely in a linguistic context as in the coherentist case. Language is combined with certain emotions but it is shaping and moulding the nature of those emotions. Language and reality are therefore combined in a relationship which is mutually dependent. Because the use of the right word both articulates and clarifies my feelings both the semantic rightness and constitutive conditions are satisfied. Language does not simply mirror a pre-existing reality nor does it bear only a contingent relation to that reality, it enters into the reality and is constitutive of the reality.

What language 'enters into' is an emotional reality which it then proceeds to transform. This emotional reality is not just a linguistic reality; if it were we would be led to the position conceiving of emotions as created purely by language. This is clearly not the case: I can analyse and discuss an emotion such as guilt or remorse without having to feel guilt or remorse. Simply bringing the words 'guilt' or 'remorse' to my mind does not automatically generate the feeling and although I might think back to cases when I have experienced such feelings that is very different from having those feelings now. The feelings when authentically experienced are different from just entertaining the words in my mind. What language combines with - 'enters into' - are these feelings and these are what language comes up against, that is, they are what

resists the slide into some sort of linguistic idealism. In the case of statements about the physical world what language comes up against are certain brute facts about that world. In the case of emotions, language comes up against feelings which, although of a different ontological status than the physical world, are nevertheless, real. Taylor's claim is that in such instances language and reality are so closely interwoven that to describe the language is also to describe the reality. To put it another way: if we are concerned with how language relates to the world, how do descriptions relate to reality, then in cases such as 'envy', to describe the structures of language *is* to describe the structures of the world.

On a strong reading of Taylor we might express the position as being one where, prior to coming up with the right word, 'envy', whatever it is I am feeling, it is not really envy. Rather I have some indefinable feeling, an emotional knot, which is weighing heavily on me but it is not until I hit upon the correct word that the transformation of this emotional confusion into a recognisable feeling occurs. It is the correct identification of what I am feeling by hitting on the right word that enables me to properly experience the emotion of envy: in the absence of the word although I am feeling *something*, it is not envy.

It might be countered that picking on emotions as an instance where language can be constitutive, that is, actively enter into that which it is about, is a bit of a soft option because we are dealing with subjective experiences which are bound to be different and open to idiosyncratic interpretations. However, this would be to underplay the role that feelings and emotions have in the social relationships of everyday life and the extent to which an emotional lexicon is learnt through the acquisition of language. A language not only allows expression of emotion but is a pre-condition for the experience of emotions and can influence the nature of those emotions. One cannot feel indignation or slighted without an understanding of the background of concepts against which such events can take place e.g., a sense of self-worth, standards of behaviour, notions of courtesy etc., and such ideas are only available for language users. Taylor's ideas can however be extended to more cases.

Linguistic Categorisation

Habermas makes the following observation,

> ...a subject can only carry out those actions whose intentions he can in principle describe. The limits of action are determined by the range of possible descriptions. This in turn is established by the structures of language in which the self-understanding and world view of the group is articulated. Thus the boundaries of action are drawn by the boundaries of language.
>
> (Habermas 1988 : 71)

Like Taylor, Habermas sees language as providing certain categories or moulds through which we can make sense of our experiences. His reference to the 'world view of a group' indicates a social dimension beyond the individualistic psychology of Taylor's analysis of emotion. Just as coming up with the word 'envy' enabled the individual to express, clarify and shape a feeling, Habermas sees a parallel in cases other than the strictly emotional. Central to this is the idea that language provides a battery of categories through which experience is both understood and shaped. People can, to some extent, choose from the linguistic categories which their society or group makes available but there is a normative element involved for once a choice is made the individual is committed to a certain pattern of conduct. (4)

Take the case of sexual identity. There exists a vocabulary in which to describe possible sexual identities: 'heterosexual man', 'heterosexual woman', 'lesbian', 'gay man', 'real man', 'real lady', 'bisexual man or woman', 'slag', 'pervert', etc. Initially an individual may have ambiguous feelings about their sexual identity but once they have chosen a description they then, to some extent, become that type of person and commit themselves to certain courses of action which, had they not chosen that description, they would feel under no obligation to fulfil. Their self-understanding is partly shaped by the linguistic categorisation they adopt. The language does not simply reflect or mirror the reality which existed beforehand but has the effect of imposing a shape or structure on that reality and also on future behaviour. The lack of perfect overlap with a pre-existing situation may appear as tensions between the person's sexual feelings and the requirements of the adopted label. The need to adopt certain

behaviours is partly a result of social pressure but this pressure only comes into play once the linguistic description has been adopted. The reason for this is because sexual identity labels are not free-standing notions but exist as parts of a wider, inter-related lexicon of sexual language. Along with the labels go expectations in terms of behaviour, of what is and is not appropriate; 'A *real man* would not go shopping or do the washing up.', 'A *lady* would never use language like that.' Whilst some backsliding may be permissible, the chosen linguistic categorisation entails commitment to a set of actions, that is, ones future behaviour is shaped by the choice made.

There are two other points to be made about linguistic categorisation which are related but different. Often in such processes of choice, the results of the choice can only be partly discerned. There are several reasons for this. One is simply a lack of knowledge about the future, we can never know for sure what the results of any choice will be. More interestingly, once I make my choice of linguistic description I set in train events some of whose outcomes are beyond my control. This is because although *I* have made a choice, so have many others whose own choices will influence me. Also, things will happen to which I will have to respond but my response will need to be compatible with the expectations associated with the linguistic categorisation I have chosen. Indeed, my linguistic categorisation will influence how I view certain events and partly determine the significance they have for me. For example, when it first arose, the categorisation of H.I.V. as a 'gay disease' had different degrees of significance depending on whether I labelled myself as 'gay' rather than 'heterosexual' or 'celibate.' Whilst some events have significance for almost everyone e.g., economic slumps or natural disasters, in other cases the significance is more selective and can be highly influenced by the self-understanding that individuals have through the process of linguistic categorisation. In education if I categorise myself as the 'chief executive' rather than 'headteacher' then this linguistic categorisation carries with it numerous implications regarding what priorities I will have, what I will see as significant and how I will deal with issues which arise.

We also have to recognise that the meanings of linguistic categories are themselves subject to change so that self categorisation under a word or phrase at one time (or place) may mean different things as the meaning of that word or phrase changes. Words can change their

meaning in one or more of three ways. They can change their meaning in a fairly literal sense where the criteria for their correct application alters e.g., the word 'prevent' now means something different from its original use; they may change in terms of their range of reference e.g., the increased (not entirely successful) range of reference for the word 'professional' to include anyone who has a job; or in their appraisive force e.g., the neutralisation of the word 'culture' or the almost negative force applied by some to the terms 'lady' or 'gentleman.' Or consider the way the term 'liberal' is used as a term of derision by certain right-wing groups but as a term of praise by 'liberals.' A recent phenomena has been the changes attaching to the words 'masculine' and 'feminine': 'masculinity' is now something different from what it was fifty years ago. Such changes are part of the development of all natural languages but they are also indicative of changing social perceptions, values and beliefs.

The cases of envy and sexual identity bring out another important feature of language, namely, the way in which language forms an inter-related network. An implication of Locke's view of language was that, in principle, one could acquire a language one word at a time; an idea would be tagged with a word, then another and so on until a vocabulary had been built up. However, such a view seems highly implausible because a word cannot posses a meaning in isolation from other words. The Lockean view has an initial attraction if we believe that there must have been someone who uttered the *first* 'word' and that all subsequent language derived from this creative act. A one word language, by definition, has no connection with any other word for none exit.

Imagine my word is 'apple' (perhaps Eve's first word): to recognise something as an apple requires that it be differentiated from things which are 'not apples' e.g., plums, pears or passion fruit. Simply to stand by an object and utter a sound, 'apple', only makes sense given a set of background assumptions that what you are doing *is* naming. If I hold up an apple to a group of French people learning English and say 'apple' they will understand what I am doing as giving the English equivalent for 'pomme'. But such an act only becomes intelligible given that you are already a language user. The process of conditioning an animal brings out the problem.

Animals can be made to respond to a signal e.g., a word, and the animal is taught the signals and the proper responses one by one. We do not teach animals how to respond by talking in continuous prose giving long, detailed explanations or supplying some rationale for what they are to do. Rather animals are taught to respond to specific signals and over time a repertoire can be established. But this is not to build up a language. If 'apple' were our one word language what would the correct response be? In the case of a dog it might be begging, so if the dog runs away, cowers, lies down etc., it has made the wrong response. In a language there are any number of possible responses even to the word 'apple'. Is it a question, a definition, a request for food, a suggestion for dessert? To identify which it is to have recourse to a language already; to be aware of context, inflection and purpose.

If we claim that words only have meanings holistically, that is, in relation to the meanings of other words, then one difficulty which arises is the minimum conditions necessary for a language to exist. If a one word language is not possible how about two, ten or a thousand words? Gaita in a discussion of Rhees (Rhees 1970) draws a distinction between ' ...*uttering a sound* for some purpose against the background of an agreed function for that sound in some common enterprise, and saying something' (Gaita 1990 : 108). Gaita is discussing Rhees' argument that 'Wittgenstein's builders' did not have a poor or very limited language but no language at all because they lack 'conversational' ability, that is, the capacity to move beyond the simply transactional mode of uttering sounds. The builders' position is just a slightly more sophisticated version of the trained animal who can respond to a signal. For Rhees (and Gaita) such mechanical interactions fail to constitute what we would normally call a language for they omit other linguistic activities such as, '...carrying on a conversation,... writing reports,... listening to a play...being someone to whom the rest of us can speak and get an answer;...make a joke and whom we can deceive' (Rhees in Gaita ibid. : 109).

This characterisation of language clearly sees linguistic competence as far more complex than the ability to utter sounds in well-defined conditions but as the ability to enter into a complex system of inter-related activities. To view language as such a system is to emphasise the 'connectedness' which exists amongst its various parts. Not everyone operates at the same level of linguistic competence which means that not everyone is equally conversant with the nature

of this complex system; young children are not normally as accomplished as adults and no one is fully conversant with the entire system. The question of how many words you need to be a language user is only amenable to rather rough and ready projections but then it is not simply a matter of vocabulary. Certain linguistic abilities are more basic in the sense of necessary for normal existence than others. Someone can get along without the capacity to use irony or metaphor but would find life difficult without a rudimentary physical world vocabulary. The claim that language is holistic raises numerous technical issues which I do not intend to pursue however there are some general points which are relevant to the present inquiry.

The fact that words are related to each other seems incontrovertible. The discussion of 'envy' brought out how this word has connections with others such as dissatisfaction, resentment, desire etc., indeed it was suggested that you cannot feel envy unless you also have an understanding of these and similar words. In the case of sexual identity and linguistic classification in general, the use of certain words almost immediately calls up others which are closely connected. The associations or connections made in such instances are not simply psychological quirks but represent established semantic relationships amongst words. Whilst not attempting to defend the claim that all words are related to each other, there seems little doubt that strong connections do exist amongst particular groups of words such that the use of one necessarily invites the contemplation of others.

Wittgenstein's analogy of language as an ancient city reveals the different modes of language, '...the old and new houses... houses with additions from various periods...new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses' (Wittgenstein 1958 : 18) But this analogy also illuminates something else about language. How do we learn our way around a new town or city? We do not try and memorise the street plan only being prepared to enter once we think we know every back alley and landmark, rather we learn our way around bit by bit. We can get to know some areas before others, gradually appreciate what the layout is, decide that we prefer certain places, consciously or inadvertently avoid sections, learn the spatial relationships between different areas. We do not feel we need to know everything about the city before we can enjoy its amenities and, of course, just like a language, *no one can ever* know all there is to know about a city.

This is not unlike how we might learn about the emotions: we do not learn what envy is in isolation from any other emotions such that we could experience envy but no others; indeed such a position is impossible given that envy only makes sense given an understanding of other feelings by means of which something can be identified as envy. A person who has access to only one emotion is no more plausible than the person who has access to only one word. Learning about emotions is like learning the layout of a city, it takes place gradually over time and consists of making connections.

Within the city will be different sections; financial, suburban, artistic, commercial, recreational etc., they may be geographically specific although they needn't. Each area will have certain characteristics which distinguish it from the others although they will also be linked and merge into each other. These areas might be considered as analogous to the language of different practices which, whilst maintaining a sense of integrity, are in proximity to other languages and practices.

The language of each practice is a combination of standard uses of language along with a more specific vocabulary particular to that practice (similarly, the buildings of the different parts of the city will share common characteristics along with particular aspects determined by their function). By 'standard' uses of language I mean nothing more than when a doctor says 'Please sit down' he means the same as when a teacher, lawyer or scientist says 'Please sit down.' All practices share this standard, common language to a greater or lesser degree and their intelligibility to others varies in proportion to the extent that this standard language informs the practice. Hence, nuclear physicists and those speaking in tongues are generally less intelligible to lay-people than shopkeepers or traffic wardens.

The more specific vocabulary alongside the standard will exhibit connectivity to the extent that the words or terms particular to the practice will tend to be related to each other. In education, for example, the notion of a 'teacher' is closely related to the ideas of a 'learner' and 'content' in the sense of someone to learn and something to be taught. At a slightly more abstract level, notions such as 'autonomy', 'authenticity', 'development', 'rationality' appear as a vocabulary specific (not in the sense of exclusive) to educational activity. The degree of connectedness here will vary from case to case but there would seem to be a way in which, say,

'development' is tied to the other three such that to understand what 'development' means would involve reference to one or other of the others or some related concepts, e.g., maturity, self-confidence, independence, intellectual growth etc. The important point about this sort of relationship is that when concepts are so connected they will manifest, what could be termed 'resonance.'

Resonance is the idea that in a connected system, changes in one part of the system have effects in other parts. In the above case, the relationship which the concepts of autonomy, authenticity, development and rationality have to each other is the result of past elucidation's of these ideas. The words encapsulate a set of ideas whose meanings are the result of previous inquiries into their meanings. If I attack or argue for a different understanding of rationality, this will have a knock-on effect for the other three concepts. I may suggest that rationality should be downgraded and far more attention paid to the arts or emotions. If I do then this has implications for ideas of what counts as development and, if I am a keen advocate of rational autonomy, it will have implications for that also. Why is this important?

One reason is that if the language of certain practices exhibit this connectivity, then resonance indicates that changes in some parts of the language may have effects on others. This is not to claim a straightforward cause and effect such that a change in the language here will *inevitably* produce an effect there. Changes in language may be subtle or stark but they will also probably (but not always) be accompanied by reasons as to why such a change is desirable. Once they gain currency the knock-on effects will take place. Changes in language may be seen as desirable precisely because they have these effects: consider the change which took place in education when the term 'physical training' was replaced with 'physical education' or 'religious instruction' with 'religious education.' 'Training' and 'instruction' resonate with certain connotations; they are connected to various other words such as 'discipline', 'authority', 'objectivity.' The substitution of 'education' was broadly in the spirit of a liberal approach which recognised a more child-orientated perspective alongside some widespread misgivings as to the epistemological basis of religious beliefs and the role of schools in their promotion. True, the change in language reflected changes in educational practice but those changes themselves were the result of educational thinking which itself would have been

influenced by changes in language. Once religious *instruction* is replaced by religious *education*, then the word 'education' carries with it connotations of how the activity is to be understood and practised. For example, if you describe what you are doing as religious education as opposed to instruction, then your perspective is altered because of what the word education *means.* Whilst this itself is a complex issue, certain practices that could be described as 'instruction' couldn't (on anything other than the narrowest conception of education) be described as 'education.'

It is the factor of resonance within connectivity which makes linguistic classification more than simply a way of reflecting a pre-existing reality. The normative constraints which attach to many cases of linguistic classification come into play because the category chosen stands in a network of relationships which entail various obligations. To put it rather simplistically, the process of linguistic classification buys a package deal not a single item. This package deal becomes especially significant when a vocabulary from one practice is adopted by another. In Wittgenstein's city we can assume that the different districts 'rub up' against each other to some extent and are affected by this contact. Some contact is inevitable and as long as it is acceptable to all concerned probably (although not inevitably), benign - it may even be mutually advantageous. Problems arise when this contact becomes lop-sided and one district begins to buy up the other in a process of colonisation. The linguistic parallel would be where the language from one area of activity is imposed on that of another. Here the colonisation is not the occupation of a geographical space but of an intellectual or cognitive space.

The relationship between language and the social world is discussed in more detail in the following two chapters, however the significance of linguistic colonisation becomes apparent given the issues raised by Taylor's arguments. If language is partly constitutive of reality, then changes in language can signal changes in reality. The process of linguistic classification need not be a neutral passive affair but carries with it implications for thought and action. The ideological use of language as a means of influencing activities in a detrimental manner thus becomes a real possibility. Controlling language is not *just* a consequence of controlling behaviour but can be seen as a *means of* controlling behaviour by actively participating in the construction of aspects of reality. If we no longer see language as simply a means of making

reference to something which is already there but as having the potential to actively shape what is there, then attention to the language we use is important. The next two chapter further develop the ways in which language can be considered to be constitutive of the social world prior to an analysis of ideological language.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed discussion of this relationship see essay by Taylor in Joseph & Taylor 1990.

2. Foucault distinguishes between 'language' and 'discourse'. Language consists of all that *could* be said whilst discourse deals with what *is* said. Foucault's interest is with a narrower category of what is said, namely 'effective statements' or 'discursive events' Dreyfus and Rabinow offer the phrase 'serious speech acts' as an equivalent for 'effective statements' (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982 : 49). 'Serious' however, in the Archaeology reduces to frequency of use for the project rejects any reference to the context within which such speech acts are made. Gutting also comments that the scope of discursive events can be liberally interpreted for '...Foucault explicitly says that the archaeology is concerned with the savoir underlying "les opinions de tous les jours' (everyday opinions)' (Gutting 1989 : 241 footnote 10).

3. Taylor uses 'feelings' and 'emotions' interchangeably although feelings such as thirst or physical discomfort are not really emotions. He clearly intends 'feelings' to be synonymous with emotions which is a perfectly legitimate use of the word once the distinction is made. I also use the two interchangeably in this sense.

4. 'Choose' to some extent because not all language use is a matter of individual choice (as Locke maintained). See discussion of Burge and Shotter in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR : LANGUAGE AND THE SOCIAL WORLD

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine in more detail how language might be related to the social world. It is necessary to investigate this relationship in order that an account of ideological language may be formulated. If ideological language is conceived as a form of decontestation then an account of how language connects with the social world will have to be such as to allow a place for its operation. The intention is not to provide an exhaustive account of the social world in all its complexities but to furnish an account which illustrates the ways in which language can be said to be constitutive of the social world. If this is the case then changes in language can produce changes in the social world and there is therefore an important sense in which ideological language can be seen as influencing that world.

The chapter begins with some general remarks regarding the nature of the social world and then moves on to consider the case of money as an example of where language can be seen to play a constitutive role. Following on from this discussion, the nature of 'conversation' is explored as a model of how language is related to some aspects of the social world (a notion which is further developed in later chapters). There then follows, by way of an analysis of some remarks made by John Shotter, an examination of the extent to which words can be thought of as having pre-determined meanings and a distinction drawn between malign and benign decontestation. _

Any social world presupposes some form of life: rocks, mountains and rivers do not partake in what we would call a 'social' world. Although such things may interact with each other (rivers may erode rocks or mountains) such activity is explicable without any reference to intentionality or teleology. We also do not consider that rocks and rivers are in some form of communication with each other such that joint enterprises are undertaken on the basis of agreement or coercion. Social worlds are essentially the product of living organisms who in some way can communicate amongst themselves and have the ability to participate in communal activities. Social worlds can be simple or complex: biologists consider many animals

to live in ways which make the use of the term 'social' applicable e.g., apes, wolves, ants etc. There are obviously radical differences between the human social world and that of bees or ants although the some animals do appear to have forms of communication and undertake communal activity. In the case of apes or chimps the argument for the legitimacy of the term 'social' to their living arrangements seems quite strong. My main concern however is not to contest the correct domain of the term 'social' but to analyse the human social world and how this world is shaped and moulded by the use of language.

The social world of human beings consists of numerous institutions and practices - government, commerce, education, the family, penal system, the arts and sciences, recreational activities etc. These institutions and practices are of a different ontological status than the components of the natural physical world in that in the absence of human beings, theses things would not have come into existence. In the absence of human beings the social world would not have just 'come to be' by natural forces in the way that mountains, rivers or rocks are formed. The social world of human beings is a world which is the creation of those beings. If all human life were to disappear overnight then many of the products of the human social world would continue to exist. There would be buildings which had been schools, courts, hospitals, prisons etc., but there would no longer be education, justice, medicine or a penal system. The buildings and tools associated with these practices would continue to exist but the practices associated with them would not. (1)

The reason for this is fairly obvious, namely, that the existence of a social world is logically dependent upon the existence of social beings and therefore in their absence no social world can exist. Human beings act on the physical world and change its appearance. The hunter mentioned in Chapter 2 changes the nature of the natural physical world through his use of raw materials to fashion weapons and also affects the animal population. If we assume the hunter is part of a tribe who work together and co-ordinate their activities then a social world begins to emerge. Social relationships will be established, ways of doing things (e.g. hunting) will be developed, codes of behaviour and customs begin to appear. Notions of status, authority and, later, traditions will come into being, that is, a reality other than that of the natural physical world will be created.

The significant difference between this social reality and the reality of the natural physical world is precisely that it has been created; it is a reality which is constituted by human activity. This reality is not the result of a causal process similar to that which has formed the natural physical world but is the result of human interactions which over a period have established a network or social framework.

The social world differs from the natural physical world in that much of it is hidden. In the natural physical world things are, in some fairly basic sense, just what they are: rocks are rocks, air is air, water is water etc. (I am ignoring questions regarding the physical composition of these substances). The social world is not like this because much of it is symbolic, that is, it contains objects and other entities which make reference to things other than themselves. In the natural physical world a river can be a source of water or food but only in a social world could it be a boundary between two countries. A shell is the discarded home of an animal but only in a social world could it be a unit of currency. The river or the shell do not exhibit these social functions in their physical properties and a closer examination of either will not reveal these functions as if they were lying just below the surface waiting to be discovered by a closer examination. To understand how such objects can fulfil these functions one has to look beyond the physical objects themselves to their role in the affairs of some community or social group.

Conventionally, we can say that such things as boundaries or units of currency only have meaning given a set of background assumptions which will involve certain beliefs and actions. If I attempt to pay my supermarket bill with a handful of leaves they will be rejected because the belief that leaves constitute legal tender is not one of the background assumptions which inform financial transactions in the United Kingdom. (Although had I attempted to pay a similar bill in Holland several hundred years ago with tulip bulbs I would have had no problems). Whatever I do offer in payment of my bill - bits of metal, paper or plastic - are acceptable not because they have some intrinsic value (in the sense that food or clothing might have) but simply because of what they represent given a complex set of background assumptions regarding what is considered to have value. (When people 'lose' their driving licence their concern is not for the physical object but the rights it confers). Such things possess value only to the extent that they

can be used to engage in future financial transactions or as a store of value (which is simply to defer the possibility of future transactions).

To engage in such transactions is to be part of a human practice. The notion of a 'practice' is complex and will be discussed in Chapter 5, however the point to be emphasised at present is the extent to which such a practice as monetary exchange is dependent upon language. The case of money warrants further examination because it raises several general points regarding language and the social world.

The Case of Money

Peter Hadreas suggests that '...monetary practices may be instructively conceived as cases of linguistic commitments ...monetary practices are necessarily linguistic' (Hadreas 1989: 115). On the face of it this does not look completely convincing. Numerous monetary transactions occur without any linguistic interchange between the participants and in many cases those involved do not even need to be spatially or temporally close e.g., telephone banking or inheriting from a long dead relation. The way in which Hadreas sees monetary transactions as linguistic is deeper than the (mistaken) notion that all such transactions must involve speech in a face-to-face situation. Rather, it is the view that underpinning all monetary transactions is a set of beliefs and commitments which are essentially linguistic in nature although this fact is often masked even from those engaged in such activity.

Money is clearly a social construction: money does not exist in the natural world in the way of shells or stones (although it is possible that 'money like objects' that is, objects with physical properties similar to what is regarded as money, could be formed by purely natural processes as discussed in Chapter 2). In answer to the question 'What is money?' it is tempting to reply that money is notes, coins, cheques etc. just as we could respond to the question 'What is food' by giving examples of food e.g., apples, carrots, meat etc. On a simple level the answer is acceptable (for example as a way of introducing the idea of money to young children) but at a deeper level it is misleading and involves an ontological confusion.

Through a decontextualisation of money from a set of background assumptions, attention is focused on the physical manifestations of money rather than the complex system of beliefs

which make the concept of money possible. The physical manifestations of money constantly change and in certain situations things not normally regarded as money can function as money e.g., tobacco in prisons. The relationship between the physical manifestations of money and the idea of money is purely contingent because whether something counts as money is dependent upon the extent that people are disposed to treat it as money. When a currency collapses the actual money tokens do not change in any way but are no longer accepted as a means of entering into future money conversations. This signals an important difference between the natural physical and the social worlds.

Money is only viable money (as opposed to obsolete money) to the extent that people are willing to see it as money. The continued existence of viable money depends upon a willingness by a community to continue to engage in transactions using the money tokens. Unlike physical properties which are eroded by use, social properties e.g. value, are eroded by lack of use. This has the interesting implication that although I may be mistaken about the value of a particular money token in that I may believe I have a genuine £20 when it is a forgery, there cannot be a widespread or wholesale mistake about whether something is or is not money. This is not the case with beliefs about the natural physical world where it is possible for a group of people to totally mistaken about the nature of something e.g., that the sun orbits the earth or the structure of matter. Although money is a social construction this does not entail a sort of epistemological scepticism; in fact, the reverse is the case. Because money is a social construction and not some independent feature of the natural world, what it is is far more under human control. To see this is to appreciate the underlying nature of what money is, that is, to see the type of thing it is rather than concentrate on particular tokens.

Something counts as money just so far as people are prepared to use it as a means of entering into future exchanges. In the case of money, people's beliefs about money are partly constitutive of the practice of using money. It is not sufficient simply that money-type tokens exist, it is also necessary that such tokens are believed to have exchange value. There is no parallel to this in the natural physical world: here what exists, exists independently of any beliefs that might be held about what exists. Rocks and trees are not dependent for their ontological status on the

beliefs that people have about them: what sustains a monetary system is continuity in belief and a set of practices informed by those beliefs.

Imagine two non-language users each carrying a piece of food; they approach and both place their piece on the ground. Immediately each grabs what the other has put down and runs off. How *might this event* be described? We might term it a 'double snatch', an opportunistic occurrence undertaken independently, albeit simultaneously, by two beings. What we could not call it is an exchange of goods. In physical terms it might look exactly like a furtive exchange - perhaps between drug dealers or parties to a blackmail - but the notion of exchange involves far more than the simple acquisition by two creatures of something they did not have before.

Exchanging requires a notion of ownership, entitlement to goods (black-market dealings excepted), some degree of trust, mutual understanding and obligation. The process of exchanging is not reducible to a physical description of events for two reasons. First, the background assumptions - trust, ownership, entitlement etc. - are not reducible to a set of physical descriptions; the idea of having the right to own something must eventually make reference to factors which could not appear in a purely physical description. (2) Second, there is the normative character of exchanging. Exchanging entails the idea of what we *ought to do*, not simply what we naturally do. Even at the level of straight barter, the precursor of more sophisticated monetary activity, the reaching of an agreement to exchange signals the establishing of a normative framework. Hadreas, employing Searle's account of promising draws attention to the notion of an 'essential condition,' namely that each party places themselves under an *obligation to fulfil their part of the agreement* (Hadreas : 118).

Of course there is no guarantee that the obligations will be honoured, the obligation involved here is not the same as a scientific prediction. Whereas the latter enables us to infer a future state of affairs from initial conditions and a corresponding theory which covers the relevant events, promises are fulfilled not through the impersonal workings of causal laws but through human actions which will include the intentions and plans of those involved. Promises may be broken intentionally or events may make their execution impossible. It is this degree of unpredictability which necessitates the idea of trust for we can never be completely sure of the other party's future behaviour.

It is the idea of promising which underpins the concept of money: money is essentially a set of promissory notes. It is by concentrating on money tokens that the true nature of money as an ontology of human relationships is obscured in favour of an ontology of substance. Money is constituted by a set of linguistic commitments: in their absence 'money' does not exist. Language is not then just a way of talking about money in the way that language is a way of talking about lions or tigers, but is constitutive of money in a way that it is not of lions and tigers. To borrow Taylor's phrase, we can say that language 'enters into the reality which it is about' and is partly constitutive of that reality.

Hadreas describes monetary practices as '...conversations designed to produce the exchange of goods and services' (Hadreas : 115). His use of the term 'conversation' highlights the linguistic character of such practices. The background assumptions mentioned above are beliefs only available to creatures who possess a symbolic system, i.e. a language. Indeed the beliefs required to engage in such monetary practices are even more basic than those Hadreas discusses. To engage in a monetary activity requires both a sense of self and time. If I have no concept of myself as an independent being with a past and a future such activities are incomprehensible. Promises are future orientated - I cannot promise to do X yesterday - therefore I must have a concept of time and a belief in my own identity. As more background assumptions (or conditions) are examined the greater the complexity of the situation revealed.

The example of money highlights several important issues regarding how language operates in the social world.

The first point is that the latent or hidden nature of language is exhibited. The ontological confusion which locates money in substance rather than interpersonal relationships has a prima facie plausibility but is highly misleading. If money is identified with its physical manifestations be they metal, paper or electronic impulses, this has the effect of viewing money as part of the physical world. Indeed the move towards more computerised ways of using money which remove its tokens from direct physical contact to the technology of digits on a screen, further encourages such a perspective; the growth of electronic banking and the disappearance of face-to-face transactions over the counter serves to reduce the recognition of the promissory nature of money. This emphasises the abstract and impersonal suggesting that money is most

conveniently viewed as a substance which functions according to principles more in accordance with those of the natural physical world than the social. Such a move will align the nature of money with other aspects of the natural physical world over which we have only limited control.

Consider the following observation made by Wynne Godley on the then Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont. Writing about the recession of the early 1990s he comments:

> When the Chancellor says he knows "the hardship families are facing, the problems business is having to live through" he gives the impression that he is sympathising with the victims of a natural disaster in some other country for which he has no responsibility and about which there is nothing he can do.
>
> Godley 1992 : 23)

Although Godley is talking about economic conditions in general, his attribution of a particular perspective to Lamont is highly relevant. Lamont's attitude to economic bad weather is the same as if he were dealing with natural events such as tornadoes or tidal waves. The Chancellor views economic forces as something beyond human (or at least his) control and that he is perfectly justified in denying both responsibility for and the power to alter what happens. Although some economic thinking may support Lamont's deterministic view, it is still the case that economics is the result of human actions not natural forces. Such a perspective as Lamont's is an example of absolutism i.e., of presenting what is a social phenomena as if it were a natural one and therefore exhibits one of the key ideological markers identified in Chapter 1. Lamont is not alone in this naturalistic view of economics. Pen comments how many economists see themselves as 'scientists' studying and explaining a set of phenomena which are, to all intents and purposes, like those studied by natural scientists,

> ...he [the economist] sees himself as an observer who is capable of seeing things that cannot be seen by others...he visualises economic growth as a forest,

> **expanding slowly and naturally, and he sees the natural rate of growth which can be described by algebra...Words are superfluous.**
>
> **(Pen 1993 : 137)**

The second point brought out by the discussion of money and financial transactions in general is their dependence on the existence of a language using species. It is difficult to imagine how the background assumptions involved could be available to beings who were not language users. As Taylor remarks, to be a language user is to operate in a 'semantic dimension' which is unavailable to those who lack linguistic capacities (Taylor 1992 : 249). Whereas non-language users can clearly respond to changes in their environment e.g., seek shelter, hide from predators and fulfil certain biological functions e.g., find food or a mate, they cannot enter into the kind of relationships open to those who possess a language. (Again this is not to claim that only human beings can enter into certain forms of relationships but that only language users can).

The third point is the normative nature of the social relationships illustrated by the example of money. In engaging in such transactions we are not submitting to a causal process such as those which govern digestion or filter the blood. These and other bodily functions will proceed independently of our awareness of them and require no actions on our part to ensure their operation. It is clearly absurd to tell someone that they *ought* to filter their blood or digest their food.

In contrast, actions which are normatively regulated are dependent upon the conscious behaviour of individuals who can choose to ignore what they *ought* to do in favour of what they *want* to do or consider some oughts as taking precedence over others. The ability to recognise oughts, to distinguish oughts from wants and discriminate amongst oughts is only possible given a language. Normative concepts such as ought, duty, responsibility, right, obligation etc., are not sensory experiences; feeling a duty to someone is not the same sort of thing as feeling thirsty or cold. Both language and non-language users can experience the latter because they are physiological conditions but to feel a duty toward someone presupposes a set of background assumptions which can only be acquired by language users.

The fourth point is the role played by belief in a practice such as monetary exchange. The practice is informed by certain beliefs held by those who engage in it such that the beliefs are partly constitutive of the practice itself. As the beliefs change so will the practice, for example, a belief that counterfeit notes have flooded the market will affect the willingness of people to accept similar notes in exchange and perhaps signal a return to barter or dealings in another currency. This is an important point for the beliefs people have about a practice are significant in formulating a conception of that practice. The continuity and identity of a tree or planet is different from the continuity and identity of a monetary system or an education system. Clearly we need beliefs of some sort to identify and categorise planets and trees and we might disagree over which category particular instances belong to - Is this a tree or a shrub? Does Pluto count as a planet? However, in these cases what is to be categorised 'this growing thing' or 'this lump of material' exists independently of any beliefs we may possess regarding their correct categorisation. In the case of a monetary or education system, there is no ontological equivalent because what counts as either is intimately connected to the beliefs people hold regarding the nature of such entities.

We could express the difference in terms of their referents. In the case of trees and planets the referent exists independently of any beliefs we may have, whereas in the case of money or education, the referent is partly constituted by the beliefs we have. How we understand education and the beliefs we hold about education cannot be separated; it is not that there is some independently existing activity 'education' that we have to identify and categorise but that education is itself partly constituted by a set of beliefs. As MacIntyre remarks, 'Normative debate is ineliminable from the question of how the concept of education is to be applied' (MacIntyre 1973 : 7).

This normative framework emphasises the 'social' nature of the social world, that is, it is a world which consists of human beings interacting with each other in various ways. These interactions can only proceed in a relatively stable manner given a set of expectations about how people will behave in certain situations. These expectations are often tacit indicating the way in which certain patterns of behaviour become habitualised or matters of routine. Some

involve moral principles e.g., the belief that most people tell the truth, whilst others do not e.g., the belief that children will line up when the whistle goes.

Normative frameworks are not static: how people react to things changes and what might have been expected at one time may become atypical, old-fashioned or quaint. The social world is far more malleable than the natural physical world because normative constraints may be transgressed in a way that those in the physical world cannot. The social world has a physical manifestation and we are physical beings but we can also exercise a degree of choice about certain aspects of our existence.

The fifth point is that Hadreas provides an account of how language can be constitutive in the social world which parallels Taylor's discussion of the subjective. Taylor's account of envy linked together language and the emotions through the notions of semantic rightness plus a constitutive theory where language was not just a way of referring to something already existing in a fully recognised state but had the effect of shaping and refining the experience into something other than it was before. This linked together language and the world in away which allowed language to be constitutive of reality. Hadreas deals with a public aspect of the social world but the effect of his account is also to link language and an aspect of social reality in a manner which makes language constitutive of that reality. In the case of money, language is not simply making reference to pre-existing entities (although the temptation is to think that it is) but establishes the set of promissory relationships (linguistic commitments) which gives those entities the power to act as a means of engaging in monetary conversations. In the case of money therefore, it is a mistake to see language as simply naming or labelling things which already exist in the world for these things are not what money really is. The linguistic element operating through the notion of promising is what brings money into existence or makes the idea of money possible. On this account representationalism cannot account for the existence of money because money has no existence independent of language.

As with Taylor's discussion of envy the question is what does language come up against which enables us to avoid inferentialism? The answer would seem to be that although language is constitutive of money, there is nevertheless an objectivity about the financial world. Things such as exchange or interest rates, bank balances, prices of goods or rates of pay have an

objective existence in that they represent a set of real constraints on money conversations. True, such things are subject to alteration but at any time I can know what the exchange rate is or how much a bag of potatoes costs. These realities are social rather than natural but this is to draw attention to the cultural background against which monetary transactions take place. What language comes up against is the panoply of cultural practices which have grown up surrounding the development of financial systems; I cannot increase my bank balance by simply writing myself a cheque for £5,000. This again brings out the importance of Taylor's point that when language 'enters into that which it is about' it is connecting with something else, which, although in the case of money is a social construction, nevertheless has some substance and objectivity about it.

Conversation

In Chapter 5, the concept of 'conversation' will be used as a model for understanding the nature of practices and the different role that conversation plays within practices which deal with aspects of the natural world and those which concern themselves with aspects of the social world. As Hadreas uses the term 'money conversation' in his analysis this is a convenient place at which to examine the idea of conversation in more detail.

By using the term 'money conversation' Hadreas introduces two important ideas: that language plays a central role in this social activity and the notion of 'openness' or 'flexibility'. 'Conversation' picks out a particular kind of linguistic activity; not all language use is conversational. However, 'conversation' does appear to be a crucial aspect of linguistic behaviour.

Shotter quotes Harre's observation that, 'Conversation is to be thought of as creating the social world just as causality generates a physical one' (Shotter 1993b : 89). This needs to be understood as claiming a primacy for conversation in social life, of placing a certain sort of linguistic behaviour as fundamental to the establishment of a social world. What is not being argued for is some variety of linguistic idealism where language creates all aspects of the social world - such a view would be at odds with the notion of a basic ontological constraint outlined above.

The key idea is that conversation can be understood as the basic linguistic category of human interaction. This is not to claim that all forms of communication are what we would normally term 'conversations' - giving orders, issuing a reprimand, reading a menu etc. - are not normally conversational in character. Rather such activities operate against a background of previous conversations for it is through prior conversations that linguistic ability is acquired and hence the capacity to engage in a social world (3). Typically a conversation involves two or more people operating under certain conditions.

There must be an assumption of mutual understanding otherwise no meaningful communication can take place. The conversation will have been instigated by one party or another so there is intentionality involved. Conversations require attention, each party has to listen to the other, understand what is being said and formulate a response. The conversation may be short or protracted, however its development is essentially open for each participant has the ability and opportunity to respond in different ways. Suggestions may be further explored or rejected, topics changed or the conversation brought to a close. The development may be influenced by a change in vocabulary, use of euphemisms, stress on certain words etc., in other words, through the numerous devices which language presents for communication.

Grice's analysis of conversation makes the point that it is essentially a co-operative enterprise; conversations display what he calls the Co-operative Principle. Conversations are characterised by each participant recognising, to some extent, '...a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction...at each stage, *some* possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable' (Grice 1989 : 26). Although Grice supplies an analysis of conversation in terms of categories to be met - Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner - these provide only a formal set of requirements whose content may be satisfied in numerous different ways. His point is that conversation is not just, '...a succession of disconnected remarks' (ibid. : 26) but an interchange which recognises and responds to the contributions of the participants. Whilst there will be responses which are inappropriate, within the sphere of appropriate response there is always unpredictability within acceptability.

A conversation in this sense is different from a monologue, the giving of commands or reading a menu. Because there exists a second party who contributes to the process and because each

speaker has to take notice of what has gone before, many of the properties of the conversation only appears retrospectively. This confers on conversation an historical dimension for it is only by going through the conversation that we can come to see the full range of properties that it may posses. Whilst there are some formal conditions for a conversation to take place e.g., the disposition to listen to other participants, make intelligible contributions etc., other properties can only be identified once the conversation has been gone through. This brings out the complex nature of conversation as a dynamic system some of whose properties can only be discerned retrospectively.

The social reality which the conversation constructs is one that is open and continually moulded by the process itself. In a significant sense we enter into a conversation with only a partial knowledge of where it will lead. True, many conversations may lack this openness and appear contrived, banal or predictable; we often think to ourselves 'I can see where this conversation is going.' with justification. Some conversations are stilted and closed, for example, the interchanges between those of high and low status (apparently when introduced to any shopkeeper the Queen always asks whether they specialise in any particular products). However it is the nature of conversations that they are always open to novel possibilities, '...conversation is to do with the 'working out' of novel possibilities' (Shotter 1993b : 70). If they were not then one could imagine coming to the 'end of conversation' as one might come to the 'end of literature' if there were only a fixed number of unchanging books in the world.

Another way of putting the point is to say that conversations are never fully scripted; a conversation by its nature is always open to novel developments. This possibility arises from the fact that we have (at least) two participants whose responses to the utterances of each other will be partly determined by utterances over which they have only limited control. To engage in a conversation is be committed to responding to another in a manner which is at one instance influenced by what another does but also allows flexibility in how we react to what that may be. Responses are both unpredictable but constrained within certain limits: there is the notion of an appropriate response. In many situations the appropriate response may be obvious as in replies to simple questions such as, 'Where do you live?', 'Have you been here long?'. In such situations we can expect a response which, although it may be couched in different linguistic forms e.g.,

dialect, vernacular or phrasing, contains a particular nugget of information. If someone replied to the first question with a description of their recent illness we would assume that they had not understood the question or were being deliberately obtuse. We would also expect them to adhere to established rules regarding the meanings of words and syntax: 'I assume blackness' is not, under normal circumstances, an intelligible answer to 'Where do you live?' There are therefore constraints on the process of conversation which need to be recognised for successful communication.

One constraint which requires detailed examination is the extent to which words can be said to have pre-determined or fixed meanings. This is important if a notion of ideology as decontested meaning is to advocated. I intend to discuss this by examining some remarks made by Shotter who has written extensively about the role of language and conversation in the social world.

The pre-determination of meaning

Shotter (whose work on conversation contains many important insights) claims that, 'To insist that words have pre-determined meanings is to rob people of their right[s] ... both to participate in developing a conversational topic ...and to their own individual way of making that contribution' (Shotter 1993a : 28). This confuses two sorts of freedom.

At one level without pre-determined meanings for certain words communication becomes something mysterious for how can we ever know that we have correctly understood someone? (This was one of the problems identified in Locke's account of language; if all meanings are individually assigned how can effective communication ever get off the ground?) As Dummett remarks:

> A language is a practice in which people engage...a practice is essentially social, in ... that it is learned from others and is constituted by rules which it is part of the social custom to follow.
>
> (Dummett 1986 : 473)

Shotter's view is that it is a mistake to see words as having meanings independent of speakers i.e., that the meaning of a word is somehow pre-determined. But the meaning of certain words is pre-determined, not in some intrinsic sense in the way that the orbit of the moon is pre-determined or the attraction of magnetic poles but through the establishment of conventions. There is clearly a sense in which language is not independent of human beings per se (not ontologically independent) but once established words acquire meanings which are independent of particular speakers (in the way that other human artefacts acquire independence once constructed). Part of the nature of a human practice is that, if it is successful, it gains an inertia, an established set of conventions and rules which, although open to modification and change over time, are not capable of being radically changed by individual acts. A tradition is established, an authority appears which exerts an influence on how the practice proceeds. Language changes but this does not '..liberate speakers from all responsibility to the language as a social institution' (Dummett ibid. : 473).

Shotter's lack of pre-determination suggests that we will be involved in a process of interpretation and negotiation in order to come to an agreement about the meanings of words (Shotter ibid. : 27). This is true, but only for some cases and it is misleading to suggest that all language use is based on a process of interpretation and negotiation. Interpretation occurs when we are faced with an unfamiliar foreign language, an unfamiliar turn of phrase, an alien dialect or a term open to multiple meanings. Normal speech is understood without interpretation because people recognise many words do have a pre-determined meaning which are independent of what any particular individual may think. Negotiating the meaning of words is also the exception rather than the rule and would of necessity require that some words were not up for negotiation. In certain situations people might negotiate the meaning of phrases such as 'keep in good repair' for legal or administrative reasons but the meaning of most words does not come about by such a process.

Shotter is right to want to open up aspects of the social world for examination through a democratisation of discourse but he takes as his starting point a position which is some way down the line. Wittgenstein's well-known comment that if language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement in judgements emphasises that it is only against a

background of some commonalty can we begin to engage in significant discussion. (Wittgenstein 1972 : 242).

Any discussion about the meaning or use of particular words can only take place against a background of agreement regarding the meaning and use of another set of words. This is not to say that at any particular time a certain word whose meaning or use is generally accepted may not become a subject for debate but this can only occur when the contested nature of other words is held in abeyance. We may negotiate about the meaning of a term but any negotiation presupposes an agreed set of meanings whose nature is not simultaneously up for negotiation.

The freedom to dispute the meaning of words therefore can only exist against a background which although not authoritarian is authoritative or, put another way, draws on a tradition whilst avoiding traditionalism. Wittgenstein's comparison of language to the tools in a box not only illustrates the diverse uses to which language may be put but also carries with it this notion of established ways of 'working with the tools'; each tool performs a particular task and the 'freedom' conferred by the use of the tools is to be seen in association with their proper employment. True, you might use a saw to hammer a nail or a hammer to cut wood but the results will be unsatisfactory and incline any disinterested observers to the opinion that you don't really know what you're doing. Any artefact so produced will inevitably be a crude approximation to the standard article and may fail to function in the manner expected; it may not even be recognisable.

The parallel with language would be the production of incoherent sentences through either semantic or syntactical confusion. The freedom of expression conferred by the tools operates against a background of established use and whilst it is possible for new techniques or applications to be developed (consider the range of painting styles produced from artists 'limited' to brushes and pigments) this takes place against a fairly stable set of background practices.

Shotter's concern to resist the imposition of pre-determined meanings on words is important because it clearly links to questions of decontestation but any absolute proscription is self-defeating for it is only against some background of agreed meanings that significant dispute can take place. If the meanings of certain words are pre-determined then disputes as to their

meaning may be explicable simply in terms of ignorance or misunderstanding. The meaning is fixed or decontested and, in the absence of some compelling arguments to the contrary, the established meaning will hold sway. This would seem to be a necessary condition of effective communication not an act of semantic imperialism. The decontestation of some words through pre-determined meanings is a legitimate and necessary feature of language use. What does not follow from this is that the meaning of all words can be so pre-determined such that semantic disagreement can be explained away as cases of ignorance or misunderstanding on the part of one or more parties to the dispute. What would infringe people's rights in this area is to be debarred from the engagement in significant debate through ignorance of the established meanings of words current in their culture for it is only through a familiarity with such resources that useful participation is possible.

There is a second issue underlying Shotter's position: Shotter wants to promote conversation or dialogue as the bedrock or fundamental reality of social relationships. In his book Conversational Realities Shotter describes his version of social constructivism as one where, '...the account of language offered is a communicational, conversational, or dialogical account, in which people's responsive understanding of each other is primary' (Shotter 1993a : 8). His object of criticism is what he terms the 'referential-representational' view which characterises language in terms of its ability to designate and represent,

> ...I want to claim that our ability as individuals to speak representationally - that is to depict or describe unique states of affairs (whether real or not)...independently of the influences of our surroundings - arises out of us first and primarily speaking in a way that is *responsive* to the others around us.
>
> (ibid. : 6)

The model of language and the world which Shotter criticises is the one found in Locke where language is essentially a means of labelling the ideas which stand for objects in the world. Shotter seems to endorse a position which is sympathetic to Foucault: he writes,

...many take seriously Foucault's (1972 : 49) claim that our task "consists of not - of no longer - treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak."

(Shotter 1993b : 37)

Shotter is one of those who 'takes this seriously' and subscribes to the view that,

...when we talk about such entities as 'society', 'social relations', 'history', 'the individual', ...'language', 'communication' - as well as 'ideology' - we can no longer assume that we all know perfectly well what the 'it' is that is represented by the concept of the entity we are talking about...It is that the entities they are supposed to represent are not 'already there' in existence in a wholly determinate form, prior to our talk 'about' them.

(ibid. : 37)

This echoes some of Taylor's views but Shotter works within the exclusive disjunction of a representationalist/inferentialist picture of the relationship between language and the world. Given that he wants to reject the representationalist perspective the only alternative is some form of inferentialism. When this is coupled with the observation that, '...there are no pre-established orders of things in the world; what orders there are, are humanly constructed and sustained ones' (Shotter 1993a : 12-13) Shotter's overall position becomes more apparent.

There are several 'humanly constructed and sustained' orders in the world such as the process by which one becomes a member of the medical profession or the Caste system but there are also orders of things which are neither constructed or sustained by human beings. The order in which plants change from seeds, to saplings and mature specimens consists of 'things' in a biological order which exists independently of any human activity. If all 'orders of things' are human constructions then the ordering must arise through the use of language for only language users possess the necessary conceptual frameworks which will allow the appropriate

belief systems to emerge. The primary language form, for Shotter, is conversation and this is essentially an open, flexible means of communication replete with 'novel possibilities'. However, as was argued in Chapter Two, there are limits to what 'orders' can be constructed due to the presence of certain brute facts about the world. We can have conversations with other people but we cannot have a conversation with 'the world' because the world cannot listen to what we say and formulate a response. By making representational talk secondary to conversational (responsive-rhetoric) Shotter embraces the idea that there are no criterial standards by which '..claims to truth can be judged' (ibid. : 13). Only in such a situation can the rejection of pre-determined meaning be sustained; given that there is no independent reality to anchor the meanings of words then language is always open to conversational revision.

However, by raising the question of whether the representationalist or inferentialist position is primary, Shotter fails to fully appreciate the significance of the points made by Taylor and Hadreas. This is brought out in his claim that realism is an attempt to provide a solution to a 'basic dilemma' namely that, '...simply saying cannot make it so, yet, on the other hand...nonetheless we can do things with words' (Shotter 1993a : 12). This is only a dilemma for those who wish to work with a view of language which is uninformed by the fundamental differences between the natural and the social worlds. In the natural world, a world ontologically independent of language, we do not expect 'simply saying' to have any effect on the principles which govern its processes. I do not expect that simply saying 'Hair stop falling out' will have any effect on the encroachment of baldness. On the other hand, given the appropriate circumstances, saying ' I do' makes all sorts of things 'so' which were not 'so' before, e.g., it establishes certain rights and obligations which, were I not to utter these words, would not exist and it is the uttering of these words in particular circumstances which brings these new aspects of social reality into existence.

There is a dilemma *if* I see all language as simply designating that which already exists, for prior to my uttering the words, 'I do' the marriage does not exist. There is a dilemma *if* I see all language as conversational and deny any order of things independent of human construction, for why is language able to influence some events but not others? The dilemma arises from attempting to impose one model of language on all cases of language use.

A question which needs to be considered is that of how much turns on the primacy of either the conversational or representational modes of language? Both are important functions of language and it may be that we can just accept that they operate in different ways. Shotter wants to privilege one account over the other in order to (rightly) focus attention on the constructive (constitutive) role that language plays in various aspects of social life. Rather than accept a division of labour for the two accounts he is forced to incorporate the representative function into the conversational. If our concern is with the chronology of language acquisition then this is an empirical question for psychology. A more philosophical consideration would be to question the assumption that there must be just *one* way in which language functions and that all language use can be seen as dependent upon this. If we accept the ontological distinctions made in Chapter Two, then there is no reason to hold to this singular perspective. There are differences between the natural physical world and the social world such that the role played by language is different in each case, or more precisely, there are parts of the social world where language can function in a manner not possible in relation the natural physical world.

We can now modify Shotter's views on pre-determined meanings to provide a more coherent account. Not all words are equally significant by which I mean that some words have more significance for us than others. There is no definitive list of such words but few people are going to get involved in heated discussion about the correct meaning of words such as 'gate', 'scrubbing brush' or 'window'. Of course, in the best philosophical tradition, we can always imagine situations where the correct meaning of such words might be highly significant e.g., in some convoluted legal dispute about a right of way, the meaning of 'gate' may be important or at the time of Pitt's window tax what counted as a 'window' but in the normal course of things such words are not contested. The significance we attach to certain words may be viewed as simply a reflection of the issues which (currently in our society) exercise us.

Current concerns may be cases of fashion which are transitory and culture specific - probably sub-culture specific - but others deal with more significant issues which may transcend particular cultures (both spatially and chronologically) and indicate more significant questions. Whilst disputes about what counts as being 'cool' or 'having street cred' are clearly of the

trivial kind, those which revolve around political, moral or religious terms are more significant. Such concerns are the product of the society we inhabit but they relate to aspects of our lives which people consider to be of some import because they affect central aspects of their lives. We may not have a deep interest or concern for the meaning of words which play a central part in the lives of aborigines but *given* the society *we* inhabit, the meaning of certain words becomes important. That they may not be universally acknowledged does not reduce their significance for us (and similarly for the aborigines).

Burge makes the following comment on how words come to have the meanings they do:

> I think it plausible that some meanings of words are universal to the species in that if a person has the requisite perceptual experience and acquires language normally, the person will have words with those meanings. A likely source of such universality is perceptual experience itself...Linguistic expressions for such perceptual notions such as edge, surface, shadow, under, curved, physical object...are likely to be tied to elementary, universal perceptual experience, or to innate states fixed by species-ancestors' perceptual interactions with the world.
>
> (Burge 1989 : 179)

Burge contends that in many cases meanings can be shown to be 'non-individualistically individuated' (ibid. : 179) by which he means that the meanings that some words have for individuals arises through a process which is not simply personal but strongly influenced by the environment in which an individual finds himself:

> What a word means, even in an individual's idiolect, can depend on environmental factors, beyond an individuals body, considered as a molecular structure ... In the realm of 'empirically discernible objects, stuffs, properties and events' (e.g., 'tiger', 'water', 'mud', 'stone', 'tree' etc.) ...Given only that their meaning in the language is fixed, their applications or referents are fixed.
>
> (ibid. : 178 & 181)

Words which refer to mundane objects are fixed through a common perceptual apparatus and their public nature; everyone has access to such objects either directly or through secondary sources. More esoteric words which may involve a sophisticated theoretical framework e.g., 'neutron', 'chromosome', 'inertia' or more ordinary expertise e.g., 'transistor', 'fuse', 'rheumatism', are acquired by the layperson in a way which depends on the use made by others whose knowledge and understanding is more developed than their own. Some of these words refer to things not directly observable and therefore lack the public access available in the case of 'birds', 'rocks', or 'carrots'.

Acquiring a language is therefore a social process in two senses: first, in the generally accepted sense that only in a social situation can one acquire a language, but also in that we are dependent on others (to a greater or lesser degree) for the meanings that some words are to have. The meanings words are to have for an individual are dependent on his social interaction with others. This does not mean that everyone must entertain the same mental image or have the same feelings (indeed they need have neither) when they hear or use words such as 'love' or 'infinity' but rather to indicate that the public meanings of such words are independent of such contingent associations. (There is some plausibility in the belief that people do share common mental images for mundane objects but these are likely to become more idiosyncratic as we move to abstract concepts).

In some cases we have to acknowledge that others may be better equipped to refine our understanding of words than we are ourselves - indeed much of education involves such a process of fine tuning. This is where the notion of language having an authority becomes apparent, although the authority involved is understood in a neutral manner; to be a language user is to be subject to an established set of rules about the meaning of words. We can be corrected, 'stand corrected', on the meaning of words (especially in early education) because such authority exists.

We are now in a position to draw some conclusions. Shotter's claim about the 'pre-determination of words robbing people of their rights' can be seen to be too simplistic. We need

to be far more selective in the categories of words we are referring to: some groups of words do have pre-determined meanings and the existence of pre-determined meanings is essential for meaningful communication lest we return to the (Lockean) view that successful communication is essentially mysterious and unknowable. The arguments about whether the representational or conversational aspect of language is primary either points to an empirical inquiry into the nature of language acquisition, or fails to recognise the oñtological differences between the social and natural worlds.

As I have suggested, better to recognise both these modes of language use but recognise their limitations - Shotter's 'dilemma' stems from a failure to make this move. Shotter is right to be concerned about pre-determined meanings but casts his net too wide and, consequently, calls into question the necessary intellectual resources upon which such a critique might be based. Burge seems only to be concerned with how words come to be attached to publicly observable objects and does not pursue the idea that the meaning of words can be non-individually individuated, that is, are socially dependent on interactions with others - a position in stark contrast to that taken by Locke.

However, Burge's argument suggests the possibility that the meaning of words can be influenced for reasons other than the pursuit of disinterested inquiry or clarification. As words move beyond those which refer to the mundane furniture of the world into more abstract realms, their meaning becomes less grounded in the direct perception of suitably equipped beings but more an area for conjecture and debate. Again, we need to make some distinctions here.

To understand the meaning of the word 'gene' involves some knowledge of biology although the amount of knowledge needed depends on what role the word is going to play in your language. For example, if I want to use the term simply as a layperson in non-technical conversation or discussion, I do not need a degree in biology but at the same time I will have to accept that my understanding is rather crude and derivative: perhaps all I need to know is that genes are part of the means by which information is passed from one generation to the next. If I want to engage in active genetic research then I'll need a detailed and highly sophisticated understanding of the word 'gene' alongside a great deal of other knowledge which will allow me

to situate this understanding in the wider framework of biology. As a layperson who wanted to increase my understanding of genes I can either become a biologist or, more likely, consult the work of those who do know more about the topic, probably through popularised accounts written for the intelligent layreader.

In such cases it's clear that I am not in a position to really question the meaning of the word 'gene'; as my knowledge increases I may find that I have actually misused the word on some occasions in the past, perhaps I should have said 'chromosome'. In such cases the idea of 'standing corrected' about the meaning of a word seems reasonable, I assume that the meaning of the word 'gene' has been agreed upon by those who are in a far better position than I am make such a judgement.

The point is that in many cases where words are employed in a technical way, the concept of standing corrected makes sense: there exists groups of 'experts' who decide what certain words will mean. In one sense this is a process of decontestation because it privileges one meaning over others but it is, in the way I have described it above, a benign decontestation. Benign decontestation is not ideological, hence the need to modify Freeden's original formulation that ideologies are 'configurations of decontested meanings' to allow that the decontestation of some meanings is perfectly legitimate. Freeden's focus is primarily on political concepts but, as was argued in Chapter One, there are good reasons to expend his formulation into other areas. Ideology is therefore, a process of what I have called 'malign' decontestation. Although the mechanisms of benign decontestation will be difficult to specify in detail it would be a process which adhered to notions of rationality, disinterestedness, openness to argument and evidence, willingness to engage in public debate etc. Its opposite, malign decontestation, would be ideological as its aim would be to decontest the meaning of a word through the use of methods which, to a lesser or greater degree, fell foul of the criteria mentioned above. What Burge's (extended) notion of social dependency and experts presents is that the possibility of malign decontestation is built into the nature of language acquisition. Unlike Locke's free individuals who are able to attach their own meanings to words, we are in a position where the meanings words are to have is partly determined by the social. Given that this interaction can be with

different groups then the possibility of certain groups (experts) exerting a distorting or malign influence on the meaning of words becomes apparent.

Whereas we do not have rival groups contesting the meaning of words such as 'carrot', 'rock' or 'scrubbing brush' we do have disputes over the meaning of 'democracy', 'education', 'competition' or 'equality'. Prior to the collapse of communism in the Soviet Empire, East Germany was known as the German Democratic Republic although it was a one party state. The use of the term 'democratic' was seen by many in the liberal democracies of the West as laughable but it might be too easy to dismiss this use as either cynical or highly idiosyncratic. If one's reference group of experts as to the meaning of the term 'democracy' were the East German Communist Party then one might come to see the institutions and practices of that country as 'democratic'.

This chapter has attempted to discuss how language may operate in the social world. The analysis of money brought out several points including the often latent manner in which language functions and the role that belief plays in the establishment and maintenance of social reality.

The process of malign decontestation will be discussed further below but a consequence of Burge's analysis of how meanings are determined is to draw attention to the role played by social interaction in this process. Before looking at the nature of ideological language in Chapter 6, I want to examine further how language functions in the social world by considering more closely a notion which has been mentioned several times, namely, the idea of a human practice. This will lay some foundations for the analysis of language and education which occurs in Chapters 6 and 7.

NOTES

1. To talk about *the* social world is to ignore the differences amongst societies and the ways in which they change. The arguments presented are intended to apply to *any* human social world.

2. This is the point behind Searle's observation that training a dog to catch dollar bills in exchange for food is not to initiate the animal into the commercial world (Searle 1995 : 70). What is missing is the deontic element : the dog does not consider that he has the *right* to *purchase* food nor could the dog take the food and feel *obliged* to *owe* money. Less likely still could the dog decide to enter into another monetary transaction e.g. the purchase of a new collar, on the basis that possession of dollar bills *entitles* one to engage in exactly that type of exchange.

3. Consider a very young child who has not yet acquired the ability to speak. When the parent talks to the child the 'conversation' is clearly one-sided, however it is only through such interactions that language is acquired. As the child's linguistic ability grows so the conversation becomes more equitable.

CHAPTER FIVE : LANGUAGE AND PRACTICES

Introduction

Quentin Skinner claims that language and practice are related as follows:

> **It is true to say that our social practices help bestow meaning on our social vocabulary. But it is equally true that our social vocabulary helps to constitute the character of those practices.**
>
> **(Skinner 1980 : 576)**

Skinner's view is that language and practice exist in a dynamic relationship where each influences the nature of the other. The question as to what characterises a practice - what makes something a practice - is complex and has a long history of debate. I do not intend to try and provide a comprehensive account of what a practice is but to pick out some central features which will allow the concept of ideology to be operational. In particular, the role of language within practices will be discussed as a preliminary to an analysis of ideological language in Chapters 6 and 7.

A distinction between types of practices will be made along the following lines. All practices are *social* practices in terms of their organisation, that is, practices are activities undertaken by human beings and operate according to certain socially established rules and principles. In this sense engineering or physics are as much a *social* practices as psychotherapy or education in that they are all human activities undertaken according to particular rules and principles. However, a distinction will be made in terms of the subject matter of different practices. Those practices whose subject matter is the natural world will be referred to as 'natural practices' whilst those whose subject matter is the social world will be referred to as 'social practices'. Engineering and physics are therefore natural practices, whilst psychotherapy and education are social practices. When the term 'social practice' is used to include both natural and social practices, I will use the term 'practices'.

The format of the discussion of practices in this chapter will be as follows. A brief examination of the nature of practices and the role played by language in their operation, the

main purpose being to defend and develop the position expressed by Skinner. The notion that practices have a history will then be examined alongside arguments for seeing practices as having a conversational character (this will draw on points made in Chapters 3 and 4). The distinction between natural and social practices will then be considered in detail. Finally the implications for ideology as decontestation will be explored.

Practices

The word 'practice' has similarities with 'custom', 'habit', 'tradition' and is sometimes used in a rather indiscriminate manner as a substitutes for these terms. 'Practice' then becomes a way of referring to the activities thought to be characteristic of a particular group or even a particular individual, e.g., 'It's his practice to have a sherry before dinner.' Whilst there can be no doubt that the word is applied to such cases, at a theoretical level the notion of a practice needs to pick out more than idiosyncratic behaviour. Individual behaviours such as having a sherry before dinner are better thought of as habits on the grounds that if we term such actions practices then there seems no lower limit on what may count as a practice; the most insignificant pieces of behaviour could be included so that 'tying shoelaces' or 'opening the door' would count as social practices.

The case of 'custom' is slightly more difficult because this is often used in relation to activities which have acquired some aspects of regularity and wider significance although the word 'custom' could be still applied to the sherry example. 'Tradition' is still more complicated because this carries implications of regularity, significance, collective acknowledgement and standards of behaviour. But the word 'tradition' can still be used of small scale events as in, 'It's a tradition in this house that the youngest open their presents first.'

MacIntyre gives an account of what a practice might be which helps to clear up some of these difficulties. He writes that a practice is:

> Any coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative human activity...A practice involves standards of excellence and obedience to rules as

> well as the achievement of goals. To enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards...
>
> (MacIntyre 1985 : 187 & 190)

On this description a practice can be seen to involve more that just an inclination to behave in certain ways (taking a sherry before dinner, opening doors etc.) but picks out activities which are 'coherent, complex and co-operative.' There is therefore the suggestion that practices are to be understood as fairly sophisticated aspects of human behaviour involving individuals engaged in enterprises which demand some form of co-operative activity within a regulatory framework of 'rules, standards of excellence and goals.' 'Taking a sherry before dinner' would not appear to meet these criteria: the activity is not complex in any significant way, does not require the observance of a set of rules, seems indifferent to standards of excellence and, if it has any goals, they could only be the successful transfer of sherry from glass to mouth. The idea that drinking sherry requires that you submit to the 'authority of those standards' makes little sense if the existence of any relevant standards is denied.

A similar stance is taken by Schatzki in his characterisation of a practice:

> A practice *is* a manifold of doings and sayings (basic actions). But a set of doings and sayings constitutes a practice only if its members express an array of understandings, rules and structure...A practice...does not embrace a set of actions that possess identities independently of the practice. Its constituent actions are constituted by the practices understandings, rules and structure. So a practice is a set of individuals' actions, but not a set of actions defined by reference to individuals alone.
>
> (Schatzki 1996 : 106)

Schatzki's description brings out again the complex nature of practices and aims to differentiate them from more straightforward examples of human behaviour. The need for 'understandings, rules and structure' emphasises the co-operative, complex nature of

practices. His phrase 'doings and sayings' links together the two key constituents of practices, namely, action and language: practices consist of individuals doing things and saying things. (This does not however of itself entail any specific view as to what sort of relationship may exist between the language and action; it merely maintains that, in practices, both are involved).

Any attempt to draw strict boundaries around the idea of a practice such that some activities are included whilst others are not, may work for some cases but there will always be instances where the activity may fulfil some of the criteria but not others. For example, questions of complexity may invite disputes in terms of how complex an activity needs to be before it can be called a practice and with what sort of complexity are we concerned? How explicit do the rules and standards of excellence have to be before the activity rates as a practice? There will always be marginal cases but this does not detract from the belief that some things will count as practices whilst others will not. The social world is not therefore reducible to a set of practices and contains phenomena which do not count as practices in the senses outlined by both MacIntyre and Schatzki. Their descriptions also raise the point that practices are more than just the isolated acts of individuals but require that those acts be seen in the light of some principles which are particular to the practice.

Practices are *social* in at least two senses: one is the reference to co-operative activity, that is, of people working together in some way but also in the more significant sense that the principles, standards etc., which inform the practice are socially established as opposed to merely reflecting an individual's principles or standards. Whilst any practice will involve individuals doing and saying certain things, these doings and sayings presuppose a background or framework against which they become intelligible doings and sayings. To participate in a practice is to operate against such a backdrop. Schatzki expresses the position as 'X-ings presuppose the practice of X-ing' (ibid. : 94). In other words, it is against the background principles, standards etc., of the practice that individual actions and language become intelligible as 'moves' within the practice. Pouring water over someone's head only counts as a baptism given the appropriate religious background; otherwise it is simply pouring water over someone's head. As a move in a practice it only has sense given the religious background.

Similarly, saying 'I do' only commits one to marriage given the appropriate background; saying 'I do' as part of a play containing a marriage scene does not mean the participants are married.

Examples of practices usually include activities such as education, the legal system, medicine, science, architecture, politics etc. These seem to meet the criteria mentioned by MacIntyre and Schatzki: they are complex and involve human beings participating in a 'socially established co-operative human activity' and they operate according to certain rules, principles and standards. We could express this as claiming that practices are complex patterns of human behaviour informed by socially established standards. This may appear rather vague but it captures what must be central to anything which describes itself as a practice, namely, that it is a complex human activity carried on according to some socially established criteria. A practice involves 'ways of going on' (including 'ways of talking') which are not just at the whim of any particular individual but relate in some sense to a socially established set of standards which are characteristic of the practice. Learning about a practice is to become familiar with these 'ways of going on' and the standards which inform the practice.

Schatzki's description makes an explicit reference to language ('sayings') and given the above account of practice, it is hard to imagine any practice which would not rely on language at some point. There *may* be cases where a practice is learnt simply through the imitation of the actions of another but how far such a practice could develop without recourse to language is questionable. Certainly if it did not progress beyond mere mimicry then its status as a practice would be undermined because the notions of understanding, goals, excellence etc. would be absent: parrots are not participants in the practice of language. However, there is a distinction to be made between activities which require the participants to be in possession of a language and those which require the expression of that language.

Without the possession of a language the idea of a practice is untenable for such beings do not have the basic conceptual framework which would enable them to engage in complex, co-operative activities let alone the formulation of rules or standards which, by their nature, are not material aspects of the physical world. Because practices make reference to such non-material elements as rules, standards, goals etc., it is only through language that such features

can be established and transmitted. There might be practices where language users are not required to verbalise but it's difficult to see how such practices would order and regulate their activities. Even in cases where the emphasis is on physical movements, e.g. sport, and it could be argued that perfecting one's backhand could be achieved without verbal communication but through demonstration - by just watching and copying - 'playing tennis' is not the kind of activity which could have come into existence without language or could carry on without any use of language. The notion of scoring points is itself a language dependent phenomenon (see Searle 1995 : 66-72) and the need to make adjudications would also necessitate the use of language.

What is clear is that the vast majority of practices depend on language to (at least) facilitate communication amongst the participants. Complex, co-operative human activities which involve standards of behaviour are inconceivable in the absence of language. The normal way in which information regarding the standards which characterise a practice are transmitted is through language. Certain bodily movements or speech patterns might be copied but understanding the rules, structure and standards of a practice cannot be so conveyed because it is only against what we might call the 'institutional background' of the practice that certain bodily movements or speech patterns count as moves in the practice and have the significance they do. Language must therefore play a central role in practices and it is difficult to imagine the areas of human activity normally described as practices having the character they do without the use of language. It is through language that the institutional background of a practice is articulated and made public.

Language is therefore built into practices in at least two ways that seem incontrovertible: only language users can create practices because all practices require sophisticated forms of communication and, secondly, language is necessary for the articulation of the principles etc., which characterise the practice and their transmission to its participants and the wider public. Language makes practices possible in both a genetic and procedural sense.

The basic question is whether language is simply a means of 'talking about' practices or are there also cases where language can be considered as partly constitutive of the practice; where

it can, in Taylor's words, 'enter into that which it is about'? In terms of sense and reference: is it that language can only affect the sense that a practice has or are there cases when it can affect the reference as well - and therefore also the sense?

Skinner supplies an historical example which garners support for seeing language as able to alter the way in which a practice actually operates. (Skinner op. cit. : 570) The case involves merchants in Elizabethan England who appropriated the term 'religious' as a way of commending, '...punctual, strict and conscientious forms of behaviour' (ibid.: 570). The purpose was to legitimate their commercial activities by reference to the most highly approved moral and spiritual values: their undertakings were to be seen as acts of piety and not simply as instances of administrative competence. One effect of adopting the term 'religious' was that once the merchants had decided to use it, they could not hope to describe just *any* action they chose as 'religious' but only those which, with some degree of plausibility, met the accepted criteria for the application of the term. Consequently, the merchant had to '...tailor his projects to make them answer to the pre-existing language of moral principles' (ibid. : 576).

The adoption of the new vocabulary to describe the practice has a direct effect on the nature of the practice for it requires that the merchants conduct their business in a manner which has some passing resemblance to one informed by the notion of religious observance: their actions are partly determined by the new language they have chosen to employ. Language is doing more here than simply providing a way of talking about the practice for once adopted it 'enters into the practice' as a determinant of future behaviour: there is a requirement for language and action to be in concert with each other.

Skinner does not describe how the merchants' behaviour altered but we might expect such things as modifications to style of dress and demeanour, changes in times and places of business, how they disposed of their income, attendance at church, modifications to their language e.g., the inclusion of more words with a religious flavour etc. The character of their practice changed because the language they adopted required that such changes take place. They presumably were still merchants, that is, they bought and sold goods but the manner in which they conducted their practice could not have been the same as it was before. The nature of the reference (the practice) has to change given the change in language and therefore the

sense of the practice changes also. In such a case it seems legitimate to say that language has 'entered into what it is about' and effected a change which, had the said language not been adopted, would not have come about.

Skinner's example moves the constitutive nature of language on to position which is slightly different from Taylor and Hadreas. In Taylor we find an argument based on language being constitutive of the emotions and hence dealing with a subjective experience. Hadreas' discussion of money shows how money is constitutive of a public aspect of the social world but in a rather covert manner, hence his attention to the 'ontological confusion' which substitutes an ontology of substance with one of relationships. Skinner's case deals with an aspect of the social world, commerce, but in a way where language is not hidden but 'up front'; the language is right there in the public sphere as an object for direct experience. Language is not operating in a latent style or referring to subjective experiences but entering into what it is about in an *open and publicly accessible manner.*

Skinner's claim that our social vocabulary, '*helps* (my emphasis) to constitute the character of [those] (social) practices' also recognises that in such cases there must be things other than language at play, namely, the activities which characterise the commercial world of buying and selling. It is these things which language both connects with and can influence - shape and mould - to some degree or another. Commerce is not just language but also involves providing services and goods for monetary (or some other) reward, however language can affect the character of the practice by influencing the types of action which are undertaken; the 'ways of going on' in the practice. In this way the merchants' language and the practice are intimately linked together with each influencing the nature of the other.

It is debatable whether any practice could be wholly constituted by language. Even a social phenomena such as 'promising' which looks like it is wholly constituted by language, must draw on the actual effects that promising has had in the past. It is only because, by and large, people keep their promises, that is, carry out the actions entailed by the promise, that the (linguistic) act of making a promise has force.

Once we recognise that language can act in a constitutive way and influence the nature of a practice, then the possibility of language operating as an ideological force becomes plausible.

If language is viewed as an active determinator of practices, then attention to language becomes an important factor in the analysis and understanding of those practices. When language is perceived as nothing more than a passive chronicler of practices, a neutral mechanism for talking about the practice, then any analysis of practices will concentrate on the actions undertaken - 'the doings' - on the grounds that these are what *really* constitute the practice. Language will be seen as just a way of keeping a record of these actions, of talking about the practice in a manner which has no effects on the practice. To see language as partly constitutive of a practice is to recognise that language does enter into the practice and influence its character. The significance of Skinner's example is to illustrate that the passive, neutral perspective is misleading and prone to result in a misunderstanding as to the nature of the practice. If language can affect the nature of a practice it can do so to the benefit or detriment of that practice. There is therefore an opening for *ideological* language to have an affective function in relation to social practices because language can stand in such a detrimental relationship to practices. In order to discuss this question further I intend to look at two aspects of practices, namely, their historical and conversational nature.

Practices and History

Practices have a history, they do not appear out of thin air. Many practices have a long history e.g., the law, science, education and medicine. Several have undergone radical changes such that their present day manifestations bear little resemblance to the original fledglings; science and medicine are probably the most obvious examples which come to mind. Other practices have changed less and still retain elements from their past. For example, much of what passed for education in Socrates' day would still be identifiable as such today and many of the techniques used and subjects taught then are still valued. The forces which cause practices to change are many but all practices do change in response to developments from either within or without the practice. The practices we have now stand at the end of a chain of events and therefore have a history. This historical dimension is sometimes referred to as the tradition of a practice, although this can be sometimes be conflated with 'traditionalism'

implying a reverence for and desire to preserve established ways of behaviour. Some practices do present themselves (or are at least perceived) as being conservative in this sense but there is no conflict between the notion of a practice having a tradition and that tradition being radical, dynamic and innovative. The same practice may exhibit traces of both dynamism and stasis during its history.

What may change about a practice over a period of time? Here it is difficult to generalise because the answer depends to some extent on the practice in question. Scientific practices would exhibit large changes due to the growth in technology so that the working environment of a present day scientist looks very different from someone living in the middle ages. The language of science would also be different particularly with respect to the conceptual frameworks employed. What all practices do however, is to transmit or pass on, certain amounts of knowledge, understanding, principles and standards through time. This is the only way a practice can survive and develop.

Certain elements of the practice may be dropped because they are found to be of little use, flawed, irrelevant or unresponsive to changing conditions. But others have a more permanent character and continue to be seen as forming important parts of the practice. This transmission is facilitated primarily through language, partly because the past cannot be revisited but also because only language has structures sufficiently powerful to enable the encapsulation and transmission of such complex ideas to be successful. This is not to claim that all aspects of a practice are fully expressible in language but that it is only through language that certain central features of practices, namely, the notions of standards, principles etc., can be formulated, expressed and transmitted. Claiming that language has a pivotal role to play in the development of practices is not to insist that all human experience can be reduced to or is fully expressible in language. There are instances when words do 'fail us' and there are no adequate linguistic formulations which fully capture what we are experiencing. Even the skills needed to perform everyday tasks such as riding a bike or swimming are notoriously difficult to put into words. The argument is therefore not that language is able to fully articulate all the myriad experiences of human life but that in certain areas of life it plays a critical role such that, in its absence, whole areas of experience would not be possible.

The development of any practice cannot be fully predicted but evolves through the participants responding to changes from a variety of sources. How a practice responds to change depends in part on what sort of practice it is e.g., technical practices cannot afford to ignore advances in scientific knowledge whereas certain religious practices can choose to resist or ignore changes in social morality. In order to decide how to respond the practice will need to consider the changed circumstances in relation to its own standards, principles etc. These standards and principles are a product of the history of the practice and in this respect, the practice reflects upon itself - consults its own history - as a means of deciding how to react.

This is not to suggest some uniformity of response from within a practice for many practices contain a variety of opinions, reflecting adherence to a range of principles and standards, or a different ranking or interpretation of those principles and standards. However, the history of a practice does act as a resource which can be drawn upon as a means of informing current thinking and future developments. To recognise the historical dimension of practices is to be aware of the dangers inherent in any attempt to describe what a practice *is* or *should* be in terms of its present condition. The notion of something being 'state of the art' is usually intended to convey the impression that it is better than anything which has gone before. In some cases this may be a perfectly legitimate claim e.g., in the sphere of technical development where a product is a significant advance on all previous models and there exists objective criteria by which the judgement can be verified.

However, the simplistic idea that the history of all practices is of an onward march towards better and better things (as if chronology walked hand in hand with progress) such that where we are now is, by definition, preferable to where we were before, is to put too much faith in linearity. The manner in which practices develop will vary from one to another but any assessment of, to put it rather broadly, the 'quality' of a contemporary practice must be based on something other than its current manifestation. It may be that the current manifestation is preferable to all others but this would need to be justified on grounds other than its simply *being* the current manifestation.

There are several questions which need to be taken up here but it will be useful to link this discussion with the other idea mentioned above, namely, the conversational nature of practices.

Practices and Conversation

The argument to be developed will be that practices exhibit conversational characteristics and that these have an historical dimension.

The discussion of conversations in Chapter 4 brought out their essentially open-ended nature and the normative constraints which govern their development. It was also argued that whatever properties a conversation may possess frequently appear only in retrospect, in other words, conversations are historical in character. For something to be a conversation it needs to exhibit certain properties contemporaneously (Grice's conditions) but these do not exhaust the possibilities of conversation. Often the true nature or significance of a conversation can only be appreciated retrospectively.

For practices to have a conversational structure they would need to share these features of openness and flexibility within a normative framework which also possessed an historical dimension. Some practices might appear to be prime candidates for such a comparison because they are essentially conversational in character. For example, psycho-analysis and counselling (both of which meet the conditions mentioned above for the title of 'practice') are essentially concerned with conversational exchanges within a particular context. Other practices e.g., architecture or engineering might seem to posses these conversational elements to a lesser degree.

A conversation is normally considered as a linguistic exchange amongst participants who adhere to certain formal principles which make the conversation possible e.g., the contributors listen to each other and make appropriate responses. As was discussed in Chapter 4, conversations have an historical dimension because often their full properties only appear retrospectively; at the start of the conversation it is impossible to know all the properties a conversation will turn out to have. Within any practice there will be numerous conversations amongst the participants relating to various aspects of the practice, what might be called the mundane conversations of work, often of little significance and routine. Not all the language use in a practice will be conversational just as not all language use generally needs to be conversational.

I want to extend this conversational model to aspects of practices beyond the merely routine and mundane. Within a practice is it possible to conceive of the relationship not just between words and words as exhibiting conversational elements but the relationship between words and deeds? A practice such as teaching might be understood as a conversation in this extended sense. Things are said in response to which things are done, in response to which more things are said, in response to which more things are done etc. Such an interchange has elements of a conversational character particularly if the exchanges are such that each party is being genuinely responsive to the other and not simply issuing a set of instructions or carrying out a routine procedure. Of course not all aspects of teaching need to evidence these conversational characteristics; many interactions may be concerned with the imparting of information, giving instructions, issuing reprimands etc. Actions may also lack this conversational elements because they are routine, carried on in isolation or require no response from another party.

Seeing practices as analogous to conversations might appear to constitute too weak a model for analysis because conversations are characterised by openness and unpredictability, whereas practices are far more organised and predictable: we can take a conversation where we want but this is not possible with a practice. Although I can, as an matter of empirical fact, say what I want in a conversation if what I say bears no relationship to what has gone before or is gibberish, then I am straying outside of the constraints of the conversation. If I persist in such behaviour then the exchange is no longer a conversation for I am running foul of Grice's Co-operative Principle. Conversations are not just 'a succession of disconnected remarks' but interchanges which take place within certain constraints. The Co-operative Principle is a formal requirement (a transcendental condition) for conversations to take place not an injunction on participants to work towards a consensus or agreement on some particular issue. (Co-operation is also one of the features of practices mentioned above).

One key notion in a conversation is that the contributions made are relevant to whatever is the topic of discussion; if mine are always irrelevant then I am either trying to irritate my fellow participants, sabotage the whole enterprise or completely at sea as to the type of conversation with which I am engaged. Conversations are therefore constrained in various ways which have parallels with the constraints operating to restrict the range of possible

actions within practices. What it makes sense to say in a conversation mirrors what it makes sense to do in a practice. For example, if as part of a practice such as medicine, a surgeon brought a cement mixer into the theatre and began making concrete, this would be seen as an act which bore no relation to the practice of medicine. It is the equivalent of an irrelevant contribution to a conversation; as it stands its connection to surgical practice is unintelligible.

Whilst it is not being claimed that all aspects of practices must be conversational in nature (which would be the equivalent of claiming that all language use must be conversational) but that there must be opportunities within a practice when these conversational elements can appear. The conversational model provides a means of linking the language of a practice with the actions of a practice. Foucault's account of the relationship between language and practice was unsatisfactory because he could provide no convincing explanation of how the discursive and non-discursive interacted. On his theory, the participants to a practice were effectively silenced as the focus of analysis centred on some disembodied discourse which had a determining power over the practice, yet existed in a realm completely divorced from the doings and sayings of the practitioners. What the conversational model allows for is not only the linguistic exchanges which take place amongst the participants but also how these linguistic exchanges may be related to their actions. The conversational model emphasises the interactive, dynamic character of language and practice whilst acknowledging that both operate within a system of constraints.

But to what extent can the conversational model be said to be present in all practices? Are there not some practices where this open, flexible approach seems to be lacking? Also, are there not restrictions on who may be eligible to participate in these conversations? It has to be acknowledged that not all practices are the same and it is a significant mistake to ignore their differences in an attempt to provide some universal account - indeed this was Foucault's error.

As a first clarification: some social practices are authoritarian in nature and do not readily appear to fit into the conversational mode. For example, the more fundamentalist religions do not encourage the open debate of particular topics but require followers to accept the truth, validity or legitimacy of certain beliefs and actions on the basis of faith in the superior wisdom of the hierarchy (a position also taken by certain political systems e.g., the Soviet Communist

Party, see Kolokowski 1980). In such an authoritarian structure the amount of conversational exchanges between the laity and hierarchy may be limited and concentrated mainly on questions of interpretation and spiritual guidance. The relationship between language and action within the practice may be rigid with exchanges primarily of the 'fully scripted' variety: there will be stock answers to questions, limits to legitimate avenues of inquiry and frequent references to the duty of obedience. Certain actions will be required and failures to carry them out met with censure. Presumably however, even in a practice such as this, there must be scope for some open, flexible exchanges. These may be restricted to participants who have reached a certain position in the hierarchy but for any practice to survive it will need to deal with events, judge what its reaction will be and this will involve some conversational exchanges taking place. As far as those who submit to such an authoritarian practice are concerned, the question must be whether it is freely entered into and its authoritarian nature transparent.

Many practices have an authoritarian character which stems from a different source. The process of a civil marriage ceremony is authoritarian in the sense that not just anyone can perform the ceremony but only those who have been legitimately sanctioned in law to do so. The 'conversation' which takes place during the ceremony is fully scripted to the extent that what is to be said is stipulated far in advance and the participants may even practise their lines beforehand. The relationship between actions and language is similarly scripted so that a certain phrase indicates the time to perform a certain action e.g., take out the ring, kiss the bride. The authoritarian character of the practice is however recognised (and, in many cases, embraced) by those involved and freely accepted. The authority of the registrar is a socially conferred authority which can be removed either from a particular individual or wholesale e.g., if the practice of civil marriage were to be abolished. Although the practice may be authoritarian in that the ceremony can only be performed by one duly appointed and requires specific responses from the participants, at a wider level the nature of the practice itself is open to conversational analysis. Changes to marriage ceremonies such as the language used, time and place, dress codes etc., show that a wider conversation about the practice has been ongoing and resulted in a more liberal approach. It is possible, therefore, for a practice to be

legitimately authoritarian in one sense yet, at a broader level, the nature of that authoritarianism itself to be held up for debate.

Practices may be legitimately authoritarian not only in the two ways described - religious and civil authority - above but also in terms of who is able to be a participant. Access to a practice may require particular skills or knowledge in which case sections of the population will be excluded on the grounds that they do not possess the requisite abilities. They are therefore barred from engaging in the practice. An obvious example would be a practice such as medicine were becoming a practitioner is dependent on displaying a certain level of ability, or teaching were, at least in the state sector, a designated level of competence is required. However, these restrictions may be seen as perfectly legitimate because it is acceptable to deny to certain groups of the population the right to practise medicine or teach. The participants to conversations within the practice are drawn from that select group who have fulfilled the entry conditions. Practices can therefore be legitimately authoritarian in terms of being exclusive yet still have a conversational character. (In the case of marriage ceremonies there are also restrictions on who may take part although this is not based on the possession of certain abilities). This does not entail that general policy questions regarding the practice of medicine or teaching are the exclusive domain of the members of those professions: issues to do with the provision and nature of health care and education are public concerns with a much wider audience.

There may therefore be legitimate constraints within practices on the nature and scope of conversational exchanges and who may participate in those exchanges. In such cases the restrictions are legitimate but there may also be instances were the restrictions on the conversational character of practices is not. If the legitimate right of participants to contribute to the discussion of questions regarding their practice were denied, then this would be an unjustified curtailment of the conversational elements. Another more subtle and hence less obvious case, would be where the nature of the practice is misrepresented or misunderstood, that is, if certain features of the relationships between elements of the practice are not appreciated. This can arise from a failure to recognise the role that language can play in the

development of practices and highlights the differences between natural and social practices mentioned at the start of the chapter.

Social and Natural Practices

There is a basic difference amongst practices in terms of, roughly speaking, 'what they deal with.' Some practices deal mainly with the physical aspects of the world e.g., architecture, engineering, farming and some parts of medicine. We can term these practices 'natural practices' to emphasise the point that their main concern is understanding and operating on aspects of the natural world. As such they are involved with materials whose nature is governed by laws, which although codified by human beings, refer to processes which exist independently of human beings. These practices involve working with natural materials in a manner which is inevitably constrained by the laws which govern their behaviour. The role of language in relation to these practices is therefore limited because language cannot 'enter into what the practice is about' with respect to the materials concerned.

Other practices deal with what could be termed the 'social' properties of the world, that is, the practice is not primarily concerned with the manipulation of inert materials but relationships amongst human beings. The role of language in such practices is, therefore, not limited in the way that it is in the case of natural practices. For example, if we take a practice such as engineering, then, in a fundamental sense, engineering is the same everywhere because, despite any superficial differences, the principles of engineering are determined by the properties of the materials and the laws of physics. These constraints on engineering are not negotiable but represent brute facts about the nature of the physical world. We cannot negotiate the tensile strength of steel or the durability of oak. In the case of a social practice, such as the law, certain things are negotiable e.g., we can decide that something no longer be considered a criminal offence, change the age of criminal responsibility, abolish certain punishments, exercise leniency etc. The variations in legal systems across time and space allow for cases where X can be a crime and not a crime, a punishment considered just and unjust, a penal system seen as both harsh and tolerant. Unlike engineering, legal systems are not the

same everywhere because the principles on which they are based are not determined by the nature of the physical world.

Practices which deal with the natural world are therefore constrained in a manner which those dealing with social are not. In the case of natural practices, language can still influence how we see the practice, the sense it has for us, although it cannot affect the fundamental principles which govern the processes by which the practice operates. These principles are non-negotiable because they refer to a reality which exists independently of human beings and whatever wishes, desires, values or beliefs they may possess. Practices which deal with the social world are more open to negotiation because the principles by which they operate are dependent on human beings and will reflect the wishes, desires, values and beliefs they possess. Language has a more extensive role to play here because it is not merely codifying principles with respect to some independent reality but contributing to the nature of that reality. In the case of natural practices, language is a way of recording, analysing and organising our understanding of aspects of something which is already there i.e., the physical world. In the case of social practices there is no parallel because language is not simply a way of recording, analysing and organising our understanding of something which is already there i.e., the social world but is a constitutive element of that world in a way that it is not of the natural physical world.

Clearly all natural practices e.g., engineering, architecture, farming etc., will have social elements such as the principles, standards, etc. which inform their operation and all social practices will have natural aspects such as buildings, tools etc. but these similarities at the level of organisation, should not serve to blur the distinction between those practices which deal primarily with aspects of the natural physical world and those which concern themselves primarily with aspects of the social world.

We can see the difference in terms of what is negotiable within the practices: to present something as a natural practice is to claim that some aspects of it are non-negotiable because they are subject to laws beyond human control. Within such practices there will be conversations concerned with different aspects of the practice which, whilst they will influence how things are done, cannot affect the external constraints imposed by the laws which govern

the behaviour of the material with which the practice works. In natural practices the role of conversation is therefore limited because the subject matter with which natural practices concern themselves is governed by principles which are ontologically independent of language. Within natural practices conversations will take place regarding how the practice proceeds and can also influence the sense that the practice may have but it cannot 'enter into' what the practice is about and actively influence the reality with which the practice dēals.

Social practices are not so constrained and this leaves far greater scope for the conversational elements because more aspects of the practice are open to negotiation. In a social practice there is a recognition that, whatever constraints there may be, they are not of the infrangible type associated with natural practices. In social practices language can 'enter into' that which the practice is about in a way which affects the subject matter of the practice. We could express the difference as follows.

In all practices there are conversational elements regarding the social organisation of the practice because all practices are *social* practices in this sense. However, in the case of social practices, the conversational elements, that is, language, can actively engage with the subject matter of the practices in a way which is not possible in the case of natural practices. In the case of social practices the referent itself is subject to conversational influences whereas in the case of natural practices the nature of the referent is immune to such influences. This follows from the discussion in earlier chapters of the difference between the social world and natural world.

Some practices are hybrids in that they deal with both natural and social aspects of life: medicine is obviously concerned with the physical nature of human beings and is thus constrained by the laws which govern the behaviour of such matter but the practice also has to consider ethical and social issues regarding the treatment of patients.

We can now draw together the points regarding practices, conversation, history and the differences between natural and social practices. I intend to do this by examining a distinction made by John Kekes. Practices, as was mentioned above, develop and change in response to various forces both from within and without the practice. Practices meet problems, or at least issues which call for decisions to be made regarding how the practice is to deal with the

situation. Kekes distinguishes between what he calls 'removable' problems and 'enduring' problems:

> Removable problems disappear if a solution to them is found. Science and technology are the best methods of dealing with such problems. But it is a mistake to suppose that all problems are removable and consequently it is a mistake to suppose that science and technology are the best methods of dealing with all problems. Enduring problems are persistent features of human life and they stem from a need to have some attitude toward oneself, others and society, and nature. The solution of these problems does not lead to their disappearance; solutions consist in having found ways of coping with the problem, in having developed a policy.
>
> (Kekes 1980 : 43)

This sets up a rather neat division of problems into the technical (removable by science and technology) and perennial (enduring and not removable by science and technology) each of which requires a different strategy. This seems to parallel the division between practices mentioned above, namely, natural and social with the natural linking with the removable and the social with the enduring. Kekes enduring problems are questions to do with, '...morality, logical consistency, education, aesthetic sensibility, rationality, culture, democracy, scientific and historical understanding, and knowledge' (ibid. : 17). However, Kekes' division seems to relegate all problems which do not admit of a technical solution to the insoluble. Whereas his point about a certain class of problems being removable through technical solutions is perfectly valid, the notion that all other problems i.e., all non-technical problems, are somehow forever with us, to be coped with rather than solved, appears less convincing. We are led to either seeing a problem as technical and therefore soluble or as non-technical and therefore insoluble.

In terms of practices this would imply that only natural practices are capable of furnishing solutions to problems because they deal with those aspects of the world which come under the technical/scientific remit. When faced with a problem which is designated 'non-technical' our

response will be to conclude that no solution is possible and the best we can hope for is some coping strategy. This has the consequence that in order to 'solve' such a problem it might be necessary to present it or, significantly, misrepresent it, as a 'technical' one for only then may a definitive solution be available. It may also tempt us to ignore non-technical problems on the grounds that, as they have no solution and just have to be to be endured or put up with, it's a waste of our time to bother with them. Either of these options is dangerous and results from a misrepresentation of the issue.

Kekes' division is too cut and dried. We are presented with only two ways of characterising problems: the removable (technical) and the enduring (perennial). This could be seen as a case of over abstraction because all problems are reduced to one of two kinds. That a problem is not technical does not mean it has no solution and the best we can hope for is some coping strategy. True, there are several problems to do with basic questions of existence which resist solution but there are also many others which are non-technical and yet where solutions are achieved. If we consider this in relation to practices, then natural practices do deal with technical problems and their solution does remove the problem. Social practices face problems whose character is non-technical yet they can be responded to: the history of such practices is partly of responses to such problems. The solution will not be achieved through the mechanisms associated with technical problems but through a response which draws on the history of the practice and is conversational in character. It has to draw on the history of the practice in some sense to be identifiable as a response from within that practice, that is, the response must necessarily make reference to the principles, standards etc., of the practice. It will be conversational in two senses: it will involve in conversation those with a legitimate interest in the practice, and the results of those conversations will have an affect on the nature of the practice itself, that is, the conversation feeds back into the practice. Many problems or issues of a non-technical nature can be resolved within social practices, not simply coped with.

For example, the debate over heart transplants which arose in the 1960s began once the technical problems were starting to be overcome, thus making the ethical issues pertinent. The questions which then arose as to the justification of such procedures were not technical but moral and yet they have, to all intents and purposes, been resolved and few now see any moral

objections to such surgery. The solution to the problem came partly through a conversational process where interested parties discussed the matter and also through a general shift in public opinion. The history of the practice of medicine was also invoked to highlight how the replacement of body parts had become an established medical procedure. A similar case can be made out for changes in the law regarding homosexuality which, again, was a moral issue not a technical one.

There is no guarantee that similar issues may not resurface to become areas of dispute but for all practical purposes, a solution to a non-technical issue has been achieved. The cases of solutions to non-technical problems do not need to be simply ones where moral questions are concerned.

Consider the process of negotiating the price of a house. What a house is worth is not simply a technical issue; it cannot be determined simply by measuring the area of the floor or counting the number of bricks. Rather it involves many factors such as the design, location, history, even the 'atmosphere' or 'character' may be important. Some people feel 'at home' in certain houses and thus value this aspect highly. The arrival at a selling price is not therefore simply a technical matter because all sorts of subjective elements are involved alongside the more matter of fact details. But it is not a moral matter either; the considerations relevant are not moral but more to do with the feelings people have towards a particular building. How much of a problem deciding on a price acceptable to both parties may be will depend on several factors but this is not a technical matter in Kekes' sense yet in most cases a price is eventually agreed. The agreement will normally be the result of conversational exchanges amongst the parties and of course, the fact that a price is agreed at one time does not guarantee that a similar problem will not arise again when the house comes to be resold.

Keke's use of the terms 'enduring' and 'persistent' suggests that it is the same problems that we are constantly faced with but this is not so. The dynamic nature of the social world is such that solving a problem in one area may result in another problem arising somewhere else. What is enduring is the existence of *problems* rather than the persistence of the same problems. The attraction of technical solutions is their clear-cut nature but the social world is

more complex and often we don't know what the effect of solving a problem in one area will have for others.

There are, therefore, non-technical problems (which are not necessarily moral) yet are capable of resolution. This raises questions about the accuracy of Carr's division of practices into those which deal with the technical and those which deal with the moral (Carr 1987). Carr, drawing on Aristotle's distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis,* seems to be working with a division similar to Kekes and is forced to characterise all non-technical practices as involved in the realisation of '...some morally worthwhile "good" ' (ibid. : 169). There seems no reason to make such a sharp distinction as practices can deal with matters which are both non-technical and non-moral e.g., an architectural dispute over the design of a building may centre on aesthetic qualities which, whilst being non-technical, are also non-moral. It's more helpful to see practices as divided into those which deal primarily with the natural aspects of the world and those which deal with social aspects - which may at times have a moral dimension.

What Kekes' does is to present an exclusive disjunction for types of problems with definitive solutions only available for those of a technical variety; the others just have to be coped with. This is not only misleading but dangerously so because it ignores the possibility that non-technical problems may be amenable to solution through a conversational mode. It suggests that if we want definitive solutions to problems then we must restrict ourselves to working with technical problems. The technical solution is definitive; that is its attraction and strength. Once a technical problem has been solved then it stays solved. As such it removes the need for continued discussion for once a definitive answer has been achieved the problem is no more. Whilst this is perfectly acceptable in many areas of life, to extend the range of the technical to include aspects of the world which are not technical on the grounds that we may then find solutions to problems, is tempting but erroneous. If the technical approach has been so successful in certain areas of life (which it has) would it not be beneficial to apply similar methods to others which seem beset with intractable problems?

The very notion of what *constitutes* a *problem* illustrates a difference between natural and social practices. In a natural practice whilst there may be rival candidates for solutions to problems, there will normally be agreement as to what the problem is e.g., the patients keep

dying, the planes keep crashing, the chocolate keeps melting. In social practices there can be rival accounts of what the problem is or even if there is a problem at all. What might seem like a problem from one perspective may not from another. For example, many teachers see noise as a problem in the classroom whilst others are quite happy with noise levels which would be unacceptable to a colleague. There is no definitive answer to the question 'How much noise is acceptable?' which will be agreed to by all teachers; it is not a technical question and cannot be answered by technical means. Any response may reflect aspects of an individual's personality but may also be related to their wider views regarding the nature of education and as such it is in the light of these wider views that whether something is or is not a problem has to be understood. To 'decide' that the acceptable level of noise in a classroom is to be 85db. would be to offer a technical solution to what is not a technical problem; it would be to misunderstand the nature of the issue.

Technical problems must result in some *action* which effects a solution e.g., increasing the dose, changing the wing design, lowering the temperature, etc., and whilst there may have been much prior discussion, the final stage is that something is *done*. The focus of attention is essentially on the material or stuff to be understood and suitably modified. Non-technical problems can be solved in ways which may require no action in this sense. To return to the house price example mentioned above, the solution to this problem can be arrived at through conversation alone and does not require that anything be done as in the case of a technical problem. Agreeing a price for a house will result in the exchange of goods for money but this is not what solves the problem in the way that e.g., a problem of wing design is solved by decreasing the area of the leading edge. The technical focuses attention to the 'doing' aspect of practices because, ultimately, technical problems are solved by doing something and what has to be done is determined by factors outside of the wishes, beliefs, values or principles of human beings. This is because the laws which govern the behaviour of the materials are independent of human attitudes or beliefs. Language in such cases cannot 'enter into what it is about'.

Social practices deal primarily with the non-technical aspects of the world and in these cases the character of the practice is much more under human control and influence. The linguistic element therefore becomes far more important because through language we can actually alter

the practice in significant ways. The resolution of the house price discussion is through what is said not what is done. The conversational element in social practices recognises a potential for openness, novelty and flexibility which is stronger than is the case for natural practices. In natural practices in addition to providing a means of talking about the practice, language can only affect the sense the practice has for us whereas in social practices language can also affect the reference itself: in a way what the practice is, is a function of the language we use to talk about it.

Decontestation

In the light of the above discussion we can make some remarks on the topic of decontestation. To represent a social practice as a natural practice is to ignore (either consciously or not) the differences between the subject matter of the two. To deny that a practice is partly linguistically constituted, has conversational characteristics and an historical dimension which apply to the reference of the practice and not just its sense, is to misrepresent the nature of the practice. The effect is to remove an essential part of what makes the practice what it is.

This constitutes a process of decontestation because to deny the conversational and linguistic elements of a practice is, either overtly or covertly, to claim that there is only one acceptable view of the practice: to remove the conversational elements is effectively to silence the practice. The remarks made above regarding the nature of legitimately authoritarian practices indicate that such a procedure is to be found in several practices. However, in practices which are not normally considered to be authoritarian, the denial of conversational elements can only be viewed as a case of malign decontestation i.e., as ideological. The importance of Skinner's example is that it illustrates how certain practices can be shaped or moulded by the language they employ. Consequently, to fail to appreciate the role played by language in such cases is to radically misunderstand the nature of such practices. Such an error is not just a simple mistake or careless slip but a systematic error which has significant effects for how aspects of the social world might be understood. If language has this constitutive role within certain social practices, then paying attention to the language of a practice becomes important for this will, in part, determine what the practice is like. In social practices language is not just a way

of enabling us to communicate about a pre-existing aspect of the world but an active constituent of that world. To speak in a certain way within a practice is to influence the character of that practice.

It is now possible to see how ideology may enter into a practice through language. Ideology is malign decontestation, that is, the process of rendering that which is contestable, decontested. This process may be consciously undertaken or not but either way it represents ideological thinking. The move is usually to portray a social practice as a natural one because this draws on the technical aspect of natural practices and their propensity to furnish definitive answers to problems. Decontestation is essentially a means of removing rival solutions to problems or areas of doubt by claiming the availability of some definitive solution. If there are no problems or areas of doubt, then there will be no rival solutions because a solution is dependent on there being a problem in the first place. Ideological language will be language which attempts to decontest such areas of dispute by imposing one solution as superior to all others.

Ideology as decontestation can work in subtle ways. One is the denial of the conversational character of the practice by imposing one view of the practice and curtailing debate. However, this can be through the conversational mode itself. A practice may be colonised by a language which engages in what looks like an open conversation amongst the practitioners but is in reality a closed one. The reason for this will be that the terms of reference of the conversation - the language within which the conversation takes place - are such as to restrict what can be said in the conversation. To take part in the conversation it is necessary to 'speak the right language' otherwise one's views will not be 'heard'. The effect of this is to decontest issues within the practice, for those who do not adopt the preferred language will find their opinions either dismissed or treated as anachronistic. The practice becomes dominated by a particular language and this then serves to change the nature of the practice (this is discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7).

The central purpose of this chapter has been to amplify and develop Skinner's claim that language and practice exist in a dynamic relationship. The distinction between natural and

social practices leads to a more nuanced account of what role language might play in this regard. Given that all practices require language, the ability of language to affect not just the sense a practice may have but also, in the case of a social practice, the reference itself, indicates the importance of paying attention to the language we use in relation to such practices. If language can shape and mould a social practice then it can do so in ways which are either beneficial or detrimental to the development of the practice. The history of a practice, particularly of a social practice, is important because there is less of a clear-cut identification of progress with chronology with social practices than is the case with natural practices. Kekes' (misleading) division between the technical and the enduring is useful because, as will be argued in Chapters 6 and 7, the drive to present education as a technical enterprise (a natural practice) has become increasingly strong over recent years. The shift to a technicalisation of education reduces both the significance of its intellectual history and the conversational nature of the practice. The move is ideological because it seeks to decontest the nature of education by privileging one perspective above all others. In doing so it seriously misunderstands the character of education as a social practice rather than a natural practice.

CHAPTER SIX : IDEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE

Introduction

The account of Marx outlined in Chapter 1 was intended to furnish an account of ideology which preserved its critical edge, that is, as a means of identifying and evaluating certain beliefs. The key notion of decontestation was taken as the defining feature of ideology and this was linked to certain central ideas found in Marx, namely, the notions of universalisation (generalising a local perspective to give it global application), absolutism (treating the social as if it were the natural) and, from Marx's criticism of the idealists, the denial of history. Marx was not against generalisations per se but against illicit generalisations; generalisations which fail to recognise the restricted, partial base upon which they rest. Indeed Marx's aim was to provide a perspective, the perspective of the whole, which, in his opinion, was the only valid ground from which licit generalisations could arise. Some discussion of this proposal was included in Chapter 1 the conclusion being that such a view appeared both highly optimistic and, in fact, unnecessary for the identification and analysis of ideological thought.

Marx's position is firmly located within a framework which takes science as its model. Marx recognised that the study of society cannot be identical with the study of the natural world but his aim was to develop a 'social science' which, as far as possible, meet similar criteria. His materialism informed a view of society which saw it as subject to laws of change which paralleled those governing the natural world. Materialism emphasises the dominant role of practice in the affairs of men and women and his rejection of idealism served to illustrate how, in Marx's opinion, this dominance had been misunderstood by those who thought ideas were the driving force behind social change. It was through 'science' that ideology could be identified and removed although science on its own could only achieve this once the insights gained had resulted in material changes. As Larrain comments, '...Marx ratifies the idea that ideology can only be overcome by practically changing the contradictory relations that give rise to it. Science contributes to the 'theoretical collapse' of ideology but cannot by itself bring about its collapse in practice' (Larrain op. cit. : 35). Science provides the theoretical framework by which ideology can be identified but the insights so gained then have to be translated into practical action, into a

change in material circumstances. For Marx, the 'scientific' analyst investigates society from a fully self-conscious perspective, dealing with the real nature of phenomena rather than just superficial appearances. Science is therefore differentiated from ideology by the level of analysis at which it operates; whereas ideology is confined to the surface of phenomena, science digs down to a point where the true nature, the inner structure, is located for it is only at this level that reliable knowledge and understanding can be gained.

Whatever the limitations of adopting a scientific approach to the study of society, science does provide Marx with a framework against which a critical conception of ideology can be formulated: science furnishes *a* means of investigating the validity of beliefs. Beliefs about the natural physical world come up against the reality of that world in the sense that whether such beliefs are true or false is determined by the nature of reality. Marx's view about the social world is that through a scientific approach it is possible to discern its true nature and hence distinguish those beliefs about the social world which are true and those which are false. Beliefs about the social world come up against the (scientifically) established truths about the social world and are thus able to be evaluated in terms of their validity.

If we abandon Marx's materialism, then the problem of what beliefs about the social world come up against is more difficult. The discussion of language in the preceding chapters argued for seeing language as partly constitutive of aspects of the social world but within certain limitations. The notion of language 'entering into that which it is about' recognised that there was something other than language at play, whether it be emotions (as in Taylor's discussion of envy) or actions (as was the case with Skinner's merchants). It was also argued that recognising that something was socially constructed did not entail epistemological scepticism e.g., in the case of money the fact that money is linguistically constituted did not mean that there could be no objectivity about financial matters. In the case of the natural physical world, what beliefs come up against is something fairly static, in the social world what beliefs come up against is more dynamic and shifting but that does not result in chaos or rampant indeterminism: that the price of goods changes does not have the result that we can never know how much something costs.

However, it needs to be acknowledged that rejecting the possibility of giving a scientific account of society does raise a problem to which Marx, at least theoretically, supplied an answer. I think

we have to accept the social world is perhaps more complex than Marx imagined and thus the aspiration of seeing society 'as a whole', of some universal scientific perspective, is just less persuasive than it was in Marx's time.

Marx's position is a mirror image of Foucault's: both attempt to provide a universal account of the social world from a privileged vantage point but whereas Foucault believes it can be done by concentrating on the language employed in various social activities, Marx believes it is only possible by concentrating on the material nature of the practices themselves. Once we recognise that language can be partly constitutive of aspects of reality then the model of society as a complex mechanism operating according to laws which are independent of human beliefs becomes less convincing.

Marx applied a view of language to the social world which was similar to that which would have been adopted by his scientific contemporaries to the natural, namely, that language is a means of talking about the physical world but has no constitutive role within that world. As has been argued above, this view of language fails to transfer to the social world or, more accurately, this view will not provide us with an adequate account of the social world. The role of language in relation to the social world is not the same as its relation to the physical world. Marx's failure to appreciate this fundamental point leads him to undervalue, indeed to ignore, the significance which language has for the understanding and development of the social world. In effect he misunderstands the ways in which language can work, and applies one model as *the* model for the relationship between language and the world. Marx commits an error which is precisely of the sort which he has correctly identified in the work of those he criticises, i.e. an illicit generalisation.

Marx buys into a view of language which sees it as an essentially passive mirror of the world, as a *repository* where knowledge is kept safe for future use. Language is what enables us to keep tabs on what is going on but itself has no role to play in the 'goings on' themselves. If this view of how language is related to the social world is mistaken then the mistake is a systematic mistake: it is not just a simple error but a misapprehension which will inevitably distort and undermine thinking.

There are many things which we cannot shape by language because they exist independently of any language we might apply to them. If, on the other hand, there are things which we can shape by language, then the failure to recognise this fact will inevitably lead to explanations and understandings of events which are systematically misleading. The mistake is not one that can be simply rectified - as if I had used the term 'snow' when I should have said 'sleet', or 'chromosome ' when I meant 'gene' - but involves the uncritical acceptance of a model whose effects will permeate a great deal of language use. The inter-connectedness of language is an important factor in the process of permeation: because words are inter-connected unexamined assumptions in one area can transfer to others.

Decontestation and Generalisation

The notion of ideology as a process of decontestation preserves some common features of negative conceptions of the term e.g., dogmatism, questionable claims to authority, semiotic closure, apparent consensus, whilst leaving open the various mechanisms by which these may be achieved. Ideology is at its most effective when least recognised and the most successful forms of ideological thinking are those which appear to be completely free of ideological elements. The phrase 'taken for granted' is often used to illustrate the point; a belief or practice is so entrenched that it seems almost impossible that it could be called into question. In Chapter 4 the process of decontestation was discussed in relation to Shotter's claims regarding the meanings of terms. The argument was advanced that we might distinguish between 'benign' and 'malign' decontestation because the meanings of some terms needed to be established in order for effective communication to exist and in other cases the words involved were not normally the sort to provoke genuine disagreement as to their meanings. Certain terms were of such a mundane character that disputes over their meaning were difficult to envisage e.g., 'gate' or 'scrubbing brush.' Theoretically *any* word could become the subject of heated debate and, given appropriate circumstances, the result of the dispute be of some importance. Consequently, it cannot be ruled *a priori* which set of words or terms are or are not candidates for ideological dispute; given the right conditions almost any word could become a suitable candidate.

However, in practice we do seem to focus in on particular kinds of words whose meanings are the subject of continued debate. Burge's remarks regarding the public nature of some words in terms of ready accessibility through the senses supplies one reason why disputes about such terms is unlikely to be heated or sustained. Other words e.g., 'justice', 'education', 'morality' etc., lack this public dimension in terms of direct appreciation through the senses and are open to rival conceptions as to their nature. They also deal with aspects of life which people feel are important; it is hard to imagine anyone getting irate over the meaning of 'scrubbing brush' given the role that such objects play in our lives. (It is not simply lack of material existence which is the difficulty, the meaning of various mathematical terms is fixed although they lack material existence). The key to such disputes is the fact that notions such as education, justice etc., are partly constituted by the beliefs people hold regarding their nature.

The discussion of conversation stressed its open nature, that, in principle, the complete form of a conversation could not be determined at the outset because each participant needed to pay attention to what the other said and respond in an appropriate manner. The opposite of such a situation would be where each participant simply read from a script or repeated a set of already determined lines. In this situation each party could know exactly what the other would say in response to his or her utterances. There would be no openness or possibility for novelty in these circumstances. Although any script can be read in different ways with interpretation through stress, intonation, speed of delivery etc., conveying a variety of meanings, if we take the case where the participants speak their lines in a manner which conveys little or no expression then the possibilities for conveying different meanings through style of expression are minimal. A fully scripted exchange or 'conversation' leaves no opportunity for novelty to enter, a participant cannot change the script by responding in a different way but is constrained to say whatever the script has written for him or her.

In the situation of fully scripted exchanges there is no chance of contesting what the script says except by stepping outside the script. Even if the script is one based on argument and disputation, the argument itself is predetermined just as much as if the script were one relating to a casual exchange between neighbours regarding local trivia. A fully scripted exchange is essentially a

decontested exchange because the opportunity to intervene and alter the interchange has been removed from the control of the participants.

A fully scripted exchange needs to be distinguished from one that may appear to be fully scripted but actually isn't. Take the example of buying a newspaper. Here we have a simple exchange which, in terms of what people say and do, may be so uniform as to appear fully scripted. But neither party to the exchange has to say or act in particular ways, the purpose of the transaction is best achieved through some request, followed by an exchange of goods and money perhaps with a 'Thank you' and 'Good-bye.' This is not fully scripted because the exchange is governed by normative considerations which either party may choose to ignore: the buyer may take the newspaper and run off without paying or the shopkeeper may refuse to serve the buyer. Even in cases such as this there is unpredictability. True, there is a widespread expectation that people will behave in certain ways when buying newspapers but there is no infrangible law governing behaviour such that we can predict that people will always behave in this way.

Buying a newspaper is an event in the social world and is governed by various normative constraints which lend it a certain degree of predictability and uniformity. However, this kind of predictability and uniformity is different from that which applies to events in the natural world. In the natural world we can, given a knowledge of antecedent conditions and the relevant covering law, predict with a good degree of certainty what will happen. For example, given that what I have in front of me is a bar of iron and I know that metals expand on heating, I can confidently predict that if this piece of metal is heated it will expand and expand in a way which can be quantified. In a case like this we agree about the meanings of the key terms - metal, heat, expand - and the required observations to determine whether or not the bar has expanded. We could refer to an event like this as one which is fully scripted in the sense that the outcome is determined once we know the antecedent conditions etc., and there is agreement regarding what counts as the bar expanding. What is fully scripted here is not so much what anyone might say although we would expect utterances to be of the appropriate kind, 'heat up the bar' , 'look, its expanded', but that the process is one where the result is predictable and the explanation (at least on a unsophisticated scientific level) attracts agreement. When science teachers ask children to

perform such an experiment they know exactly what will happen and have a plausible explanation as to why.

The attraction of science is that it deals with generalisations of the lawlike kind; with generalisations which ascribe properties to a set of objects such that all actual and potential members of the set will conform to the generalisation. The reason such a claim can be made is that such physical processes operate according to laws which, although codified by human beings, operate independently of human beings and their beliefs. The expansion of metals may be quantified and explained by humans but that metals expand is a feature of the physical world which is completely independent of human beings. We have not decided that metals will expand in the way that we have decided that January 1st. will be a public holiday. Generalisations about the physical world are possible because there exist regularities whose nature, within certain limits, can be discerned; they exhibit a lawlike behaviour.

Lawlike generalisations about the physical world deal with phenomena which, in some fairly basic sense, are 'just there', they constitute brute facts about the nature of physical reality. As such they do not need to be justified or legitimated, they do not carry any moral baggage, nobody can be held responsible for their existence or effects. They are not the product of any human enterprise such that we might rightly hold to account those who had created the laws by which the physical world operates. Although we may condemn the use made of some scientific knowledge, this opprobrium cannot be aimed at the lawlike regularities themselves but only to their application by human beings. Organo-phosphates may have detrimental effects on human health but the chemical laws which govern their behaviour are not themselves candidates for moral criticism.

There are then areas where generalisations are perfectly legitimate because the subject of generalisation is one which admits of such treatment and science is an obvious example. Generalisations support of counterfactual conditionals is based on the assumption that what is known will apply to all situations which are similar in the relevant scientific respect. The role of language is largely passive; only language users could formulate these generalisations but what these generalisations are about exists independently of any language used in their codification. Language fulfils the role of minute taker, recordkeeper, communication facilitator, attentive

observer, repository of knowledge but has no direct influence on the processes under investigation.

Obviously not all events in the natural world are fully scripted e.g., we may have no idea what would be the effects of introducing drug X to the human body, but many are and, to that extent, represent decontested events. The language of decontestation through an appeal to scientific principles thus provides one powerful mechanism for ideological thinking. If an event or practice can be portrayed as possessing a decontested character because of its scientific nature then attempts to object to it may be dismissed as either ignorance or irrationality. The appeal to science emphasises the impersonal nature of whatever is being brought under its remit. The behaviour of iron bars is unaffected by any beliefs that individuals may have; iron bars are not to any extent constituted by the beliefs that people may have about them.

The lawlike generalisations which govern the behaviour of iron bars are different from accidental generalisations such as 'All the doors in my hose are painted red' which merely pick out a contingent relationship. It does not follow that if something were a door in my house then it would be red as if there were a causal relationship in operation. Between the scientific lawlike generalisations and the merely contingent are cases of generalisation which have a normative character such that they allow of some uniformity of behaviour and prediction. For example, 'All cars in Great Britain drive on the left' is a generalisation about which side of the road we drive but it does not involve any causal relationship such that if anything were a car in Great Britain it would inevitably be found on the left side of the road. On the other hand, it does more than simply pick out an accidental generalisation; it is not just through individual fiat that drivers position their cars on the left-hand side of the road.

We use such generalisations both as a description of what people do in fact do and as a way of predicting what they will do. If two people meet for the first time we might expect that they will shake hands and although this is not inevitable, it is more likely than not. Methods of greeting change, fewer men raise their hats to women because hat wearing is less common and anyway its considered rather old fashioned, even quaint. Social kissing is becoming more popular but is probably still a minority practice in Great Britain.

It is the existence of such normative generalisations which make social life possible because we can feel fairly confident that most of the time most people will adhere to established patterns of behaviour. Driving is a good example because safe driving relies on the vast majority of drivers abiding by a set of regulations which enables the prediction of behaviour. The pressure to conform to the generalisations of driving is strengthened by a legal framework which punishes those who transgress the rules but in many cases there are no such penalties the only constraints arising from the normative nature of the rules themselves, conscience and the reactions of others to such transgressions.

The lawlike generalisations of science decontest because they provide a definitive, causal account of some phenomena by bringing it under an appropriate covering law and antecedent conditions. Normative generalisations do not provide such an account because there is no covering law such that we can provide a definitive causal account.

Kolakowski cites an example of where the difference between these types of generalisations is blurred (Kolakowski 1980 : 128). He compares the statement 'a Christian does not steal' with 'a Soviet man does not steal.' Whilst the former is intended as a normative injunction regarding acceptable behaviour for anyone who considers himself to be a Christian, the latter has a much stronger meaning. The phrase 'a Soviet man does not steal' is intended to be more than just a moral injunction but to be a statement of fact about, '...the essence of the Soviet man as he 'really' is ...[A] believer is expected to take for granted not only that non-stealing is part of the 'essence' of Soviet man as normatively defined, but also that Soviet people do not actually steal' (ibid. : 128). The phrase thus takes on an almost lawlike character expressing some fact about the nature of Soviets which moves from what people *ought* to do to what they *actually* do. This example illustrates an attempt to portray an aspect of human behaviour normally considered to be under the aegis of normative constraints as governed by something much stronger. Whereas the phrase 'a Christian man does not steal' can be understood as prescribing a standard of behaviour and allowing for cases where Christians may steal but still be Christians, the Soviet instance aims to present a fact about the world as if a Soviet man could not steal just as he could not live without food and water. The force of this generalisation ideologically is that it fixes the nature of Soviet man (at least in respect of stealing) and thus attempts to decontest any disputes which could arise

regarding this feature of Soviet human nature. It tries to achieve this by presenting an aspect of human behaviour as fixed by laws stronger than the normative constraints which are known to apply. Consequently it was possible to claim that in the Soviet Union theft did not exist despite the every day experiences of the population.

The differences between generalisations of a scientific kind and those of a normative nature is important because attempts to decontest areas of belief often confuse or elide between the two. In particular there is a tendency (especially in education) to present certain beliefs, and consequently the actions which they inform, as having a scientific or technical character which then allows for sweeping generalisations to be made. As will be argued below and in Chapter 7, this can have the effect of distorting the nature of a practice such as education by presenting it as a set of pre-specifiable processes which have universal application. One means of exploring this issue is through an analysis of the role of metaphor.

The role of metaphor

Metaphors are ubiquitous in language and often provide illuminating ways of understanding complex relationships. They are also a means of generating ideology because their form is one which claims that 'A is B', that is, of saying that something is something else. Metaphors can be powerful models for thought and our understanding of many aspects of the social world are heavily influenced by metaphorical language. In Chapter 4 the idea of 'resonance' was discussed in relation to the inter-connectedness of language. Resonance was intended to capture the relationship which existed amongst words such that the use of a particular word or phrase was able to implicate others words and phrases. The notion of resonance is identified by Black as one of two components in an 'active metaphorical statement', the other being 'emphasis' (Black 1979 : 26). Emphatic metaphors are intended to be dwelt upon for the sake of their, '...unstated implications: Their producers need the receiver's co-operation in perceiving *what lies behind the words used* ' (my emphasis). Resonant metaphors are those which support a high degree of 'implicative elaboration' (ibid. : 26-27). Metaphors which are emphatic and resonant Black refers to as 'strong metaphors.'

Black's view of metaphors is that they are 'interactive' involving two distinct subjects, namely, a primary subject and a secondary subject. The interaction occurs when '...(a) the presence of the primary subject incites the hearer to select some of the secondary subject's properties; and (b) invites him to construct a parallel implication-complex that can fit the primary subject; and (c) reciprocally induces parallel changes in the secondary subject' (ibid. : 29). If the form of a metaphor is 'A is B' then the hearer, or reader, takes some properties of B and applies them to A, constructing a parallel 'implication-complex' for A, which then feeds back into B effecting a set of parallel changes in B.

Metaphors certainly function as in (a) and (b) but the extent that (c) is fulfilled is less clear. If we take a metaphor such as 'Man is a beast' the invitation is to select properties of being a 'beast' which are then applied to 'Man' to form an implication complex, e.g. 'Man is without kindness, has no moral standards, is violent, motivated by base instincts etc.' What, however, are the parallel changes which occur in 'beast'? If we are to select aspects of 'Man' and apply them to 'beast' then if we apply the same set of properties which we have already appropriated from 'beast' this will have no effect on the meaning of 'beast' for we will be simply putting back what we have taken. If we are meant to perform a parallel implicature and take other aspects of 'Man', presumably some 'non-beast' properties, then this will be to soften the meaning that 'beast' has for it will now be polluted with other properties, e.g., responsibility, kindness, affection etc. The effect of this is to weaken the force of the original metaphor for the parallel changes alter the meaning of 'beast.' If this interchange continues both terms of the metaphor run the danger of coalescing into each other. The force of the original metaphor depends upon the meaning of 'beast' being fixed; once 'man properties of a non-beast kind' are allowed to change the nature of the secondary subject, the power of the metaphor is reduced. Whereas (a) and (b) are general conditions for the operation of metaphors, (c) seems at best an optional feature.

Black's own example 'Marriage is a zero-sum game' intends that marriage is viewed as having some of the characteristics of a zero-sum game, we are not intended to see a 'zero-sum game' as being changed by reflections on the nature of marriage. Skinner's Elizabethan merchants might have described their own activities in a metaphor such as 'Commerce is a religious practice' where the implication complex is a one-way process which needs to feed off the established

meanings appropriate to notions of religious observance. There would have been little expectation that the nature of religious practice would be influenced by the commercial activities of the merchants rather their practices are influenced by the language of religion. The religious metaphor is chosen precisely because it seems sufficiently different from their own practices to imbue them with the necessary legitimating framework.

Cooper distinguishes between metaphors as individual utterances and 'metaphorizing', '...the activity of systematically talking about one domain in terms lifted from another, an activity which generates, *inter alia* , metaphors' (Cooper 1985 : 47). The use of *inter alia* is important for the process of metaphorizing is unlikely to consist of simply the generation of a string of metaphors but will involve other non-metaphorical uses of language. Familiar words may be gradually replaced by new ones, the description of practices couched in a different language, the actual style of the language may be altered, that is, the way people speak may take on a slightly modified grammatical form. The metaphors generated by such a process will be part of a more general change in language use.

It is in the case of metaphorizing that Black's condition (c) may be fulfilled. Metaphorizing involves the systematic use of language taken from one domain and applying it to another not the simple singular employment of *a* metaphor. This would need to be a process which took place over a period of time to allow the interchanges to occur and the feedback connections to be made. An example of such a case is provided by Barbera in her discussion of the relationship between medicine and politics in the nineteenth century (Barbera 1993). Here the human body was used as political metaphor and the body politic as a medical metaphor. Barbera argues that these two disciplines metaphorized each other as terms from one discipline were used as a means of characterising the nature of the other,

> ...a disease is still nearly always *disorder* or *discordance* (health is, obviously, *order* and *harmony*); but if pathological *disorder* is defined as a "riotous insurgency of dependent parts", the physicians task will not be that of reordering a puzzle or retuning a musical instrument, but a real policeman's duty.
>
> (ibid. : 147-148)

Metaphorizing involves using a language taken from one domain and applying it to another. (This has echoes of the conceptual colonisation mentioned above in chapter 4 where the language of one area of social life is transferred to another). Whether or not such a transfer is illuminating, is something which there appears to be no certain way of deciding independently of considering particular cases. What is true is that metaphorical uses of language pervade much ordinary speech and the argument that this is simply to be accounted for through the aesthetic pleasure *that such linguistic devices afford seems wholly inadequate.*

Mooij identifies three main functions of metaphors: the emotive, the persuasive and the cognitive (Mooij 1993). The extent to which metaphors have a cognitive content has been the subject of much discussion (see e.g., Ankersmit & Mooij 1993). Central to such debates is the extent that metaphors can be said possess truth values, on the basis that cognitive claims only make sense given some way of distinguishing true and false statements. Cooper correctly illustrates the difficulty of trying to assign literal meanings to metaphors in order to test their truth value: either the metaphor can be translated into other expressions but these expressions cannot be literal or it cannot in which case it is not a candidate for literal truth (Cooper 1993). Cooper's solution is to offer a broader and deeper account of truth in which literal and metaphorical truth may be seen as variants although he does not really develop this idea in any detail rather being content to supply some suggestive examples. (ibid. : 44 -47).

The cognitive issue can be approached from a slightly different perspective. Suppose there exist some metaphor 'X is Y' to which I assent. That is, I hold 'X is Y' or agree with 'X is Y', when X is brought up I will sometimes say 'X is Y' to bring out some point or other. Now if I assent to this metaphor I must in some way believe that 'X is Y'; it would be peculiar if I were to make reference to it but not believe it. As Wiggins' remarks, 'Truth is a primary dimension of assessment for beliefs and for sentences that can express or report beliefs' (Wiggins 1991 : 147). In other words, if I believe something I cannot be indifferent as to its truth or falsity; to hold a belief is to be partisan towards the truth of that belief. It would be absurd to say 'I believe p' but I have no interest in whether p is true or false. The metaphor 'X is Y' makes a claim, namely that 'X is Y' and if I believe that claim then I must believe that it is, in some sense, true. The truth

involved here will not be a literal truth in the way that 'I believe there is a cat in the garden' can be shown to be true by looking in the garden for the presence of felines but a notion less precise.

There are difficulties with this once we recognise that although I assent to 'X is Y' others may not, they do not share my belief in the metaphor. Their dissent may be expressed as 'I don't believe 'X is Y' or ''X is Y' is not true.' The picture may be further complicated by expressions such as 'There's some truth in that' (referring to 'X is Y') which is often how people do respond to metaphorical claims and indicates the obvious point that such claims are not intended to be taken literally.

Consider the persuasive element mentioned above by Mooij. We might argue that metaphors are not intended to be truth bearing statements but mechanisms for persuasion, which they certainly can be. But if someone is persuaded by something why are they so persuaded? If we exclude all but the most weak-minded who may be persuaded by almost anything, then the majority are clearly not persuaded by just anything. To be persuaded by something I need to believe it or at least put the issue in the pending tray to await further consideration. People are persuaded for numerous reasons but to be persuaded one has to think there is 'something in this' or ' that could be true' or 'I'll buy that' etc. Persuasion is an activity which engages the mind in some way or another and involves 'coming to see' in a slightly altered manner (where 'see' implies some change of orientation). If I am persuaded by a metaphor, then I must believe that there is something in the metaphor which, for want of a better term, strikes me as 'true.'

A metaphor might make me see connections which I had not previously considered and such a process is a cognitive one. A child who knows that '3 + 5 = 8' knows something; if that child comes to realise that ' 8 - 3 = 5' they know something else although the latter knowledge is actually already 'contained' in the first equation. Nevertheless, the child's understanding of arithmetic has increased by seeing connections which, although present, were previously unacknowledged. Similarly with a metaphor: seeing something in a different way, re-ordering what I already know into a different relationship, can increase my understanding and, hence, count as a cognitive process.

Scheffler claims that metaphorical statements are an invitation to search for analogies between two things that the metaphor only vaguely suggests. (Scheffler 1960 : 47-48). The use of the words

'invitation', 'search' and 'vaguely' encourages the idea that dealing with metaphors is an activity which engages the conscious mind at some level or another. An 'invitation' invites a response and one cannot 'search' for something without having the intention to look for it. Being persuaded by a metaphor requires some cognitive work on the part of the recipient who is required to engage with the metaphor: being persuaded by a metaphor is not coming to see something in a certain way as if by the use of drugs or conditioning. The 'vagueness' referred to by Scheffler can be of different orders; some metaphors may be extremely obtuse, others more readily accessible: 'Sally is a cow' is more readily comprehensible than 'Truth is a woman.'

The vagueness of some metaphors is part of their power for they permit of various interpretations; the more vague the metaphor the more interpretations are possible. Each can take what they want from the metaphor. This allows assent to a metaphor even though different interpretations may be held by different receivers. The extent to which interpretations may diverge will depend on the particular metaphor but the ideological function of vagueness can be to attract an apparent consensus when deeper analysis would exhibit real differences of understanding and meaning. (This echoes one of Marx's central criticisms of ideological thinking, namely, that it is insufficiently analytical and trades on surface similarities rather than examining underlying assumptions).

Metaphors can function ideologically as ways of decontesting issues through the generation of an apparent consensus based on the ambiguity of the metaphor itself. In such cases the metaphor may also have an emotional appeal e.g., 'The child is a delicate plant' where the notions of caring, protection and nature are suggested - and who wants to be considered uncaring, reckless or to be setting their face against what is natural? The value of a metaphor can only be determined once the invitation to search for analogies is taken up or the implication complex examined.

This is one reason why Barrow's objection that if someone understands the A and B terms of a metaphor, '...it is not clear what can be gained in terms of clarity of understanding by introducing the metaphor' (Barrow 1997 : 119) misses the point. Clearly to even begin to understand a metaphor I need to be familiar with the A and B terms - 'Man is an ester' makes no sense if I don't know what an 'ester' is (and little more even if I do) - but whilst this is a necessary condition for understanding a metaphor, it is not a sufficient one. If I understand the A and B

terms, then I can consider the possible relationships between them. Given that I have not done this before (and even if I have some metaphors may become more interesting the second time around) I may well find connections which alter my perspective on some issue. I can know A and B without ever having considered how they might be related and it is presumably the function of metaphor to undertake this examination. Metaphors, when they are successful, enable us to 'see' or 'understand' something in a different way which may or may not be illuminating. Cooper recognises the way that metaphors may provide a deficient understanding not only through oppressive, propagandist institutions '...but through the everyday workings, in our society, of schooling, advertising, and in particular, *speech*' (op. cit. : 55).

One feature of metaphors that neither Black or Cooper discuss is the latent generalisations which many contain. Not all metaphors contain implicit generalisations: 'Sally is a cow' would not normally be thought to apply to all women or even all women called 'Sally'. The reference will normally be one individual whom, it is claimed, is a cow. There is no generalisation implied in such a metaphor. Others are not so subject specific: 'Man is a beast' is meant to apply to all men, as, 'The child is a delicate plant' is meant to apply to all children. Each can be rendered in the generalised form with no loss of meaning: 'All men are beasts', 'All children are delicate plants.' Metaphors of this generalising sort gain part of whatever power they have precisely because they make generalisable claims. Metaphors don't tend to be hedged with 'ifs', 'buts', 'maybes', 'in most cases', 'ceteris paribus' clauses etc. If they did their force would be severely weakened: 'Fifty percent of the children I have taught were delicate plants' or 'All men are beasts - apart from my husband, male members of my immediate family...plus the man who works in the D.I.Y. shop.' The force of a metaphor is partly its unconditional nature ('partly' because it also depends on how good a metaphor it is, how 'strong' in Black's terms). The use of the word 'is' conveys a sense of certainty, the clear identification of one thing with something else. 'Is' is a word which settles things: 'What is it?' 'It's an X', 'Is it?', 'It is.'

The range of reference of generalising metaphors need not be as extensive as to include whole sets of entities - men, women, children - but refer only to specific sub groups - teachers, doctors, traffic wardens etc. Within practices, metaphors of the generalising sort, whilst they may lack grand sweep of those which refer to notions such as 'Man', 'Nature' or 'Life', can nevertheless be

powerful within their own limited domain. Education is a rich source of metaphorical language, particularly of metaphorizing where the language of another practice is applied to educational issues. Metaphorizing, is more than simply producing *a* metaphor but involves claiming some similarity between A and B such that substantive connections may be made between the two. Again, we need to distinguish between the ordinary everyday language which is, to a greater or lesser extent, common to all practices and the specific language or specific meanings given to words within particular practices which are characteristic of them.

Many metaphors are unsuccessful in that they fail to make an illuminating connection between the topic and the vehicle. They may attempt to forge a link which is weak and unconvincing: 'Nature is a 15mm. copper pipe twisted through 27 degrees' has little impact because the identity serves no illuminative purpose. A good metaphor will be one where the vehicle is the right vehicle for the job at hand. Just as Taylor argued that the right word 'worked' because it was the right word (and not vice-versa) in a metaphor the right B term will be the one which works for the particular A term. In a successful metaphor the success entails linking together two terms such that the B term brings into focus some aspect of the A term and it does this by suggesting (in Black's phrase) a parallel implication complex

The 'clarification and expression' which Taylor identified in his discussion of 'envy' has a parallel in metaphor: my assent to a metaphor both expresses a belief and clarifies or more clearly defines that belief for me. In the case of 'envy' it was claimed that the greater clarity came from locating my feeling in a wider emotional lexicon where it could be distinguished from other similar feelings and questions could be raised regarding its origin, validity etc. In the case of a metaphor the clarity comes from the adoption of the parallel implication complex; there is something in the B term which, in some way, both expresses and clarifies my beliefs in relation to the A term. Because not everyone finds the same metaphor illuminating it does not follow that the metaphor cannot be illuminating, just as not everyone has to find a joke to be amusing for that joke to be amusing. If the metaphor is a strong metaphor then it will have some effect on how I view the A term: I now see the A term from a different perspective.

Metaphor in Education

Someone tells me or I read that 'Schools are businesses' or 'A school is a business.' As an isolated claim this may or not attract my assent but it is more likely to be part of a wider process of metaphorizing where, over a period of time, I have been 'softened up' by an increasing use of business language in relation to education. Under such conditions I might be inclined to agree. The cultural climate may be one where economic considerations are to the fore and other social institutions are also being subject to an audit in terms which draw heavily on commercial criteria. Assume also that I have a set of beliefs or feelings about education which, although not well-defined, are in sympathy with this approach. The metaphor 'A school is a business' then succinctly expresses these beliefs and at the same time clarifies them for me: I might say, ' Exactly, we need to see ourselves as businesses.' How does it clarify? It provides the parallel implication complex which gives me a different perspective on the practice of education. It links education to another practice and invites me to apply its language, methods and values to my own.

If I am serious about seeing schools as businesses then I will have to apply business concepts, practices and language to my own position: I will need to 'see' education in business terms. My understanding of the practice will be informed by language taken from another practice and this will affect what I do and say. If nothing changes then the implication will be that I was not serious in my assent to the metaphor and attendant metaphorizing. This is a conceptual point about the relationship between language and action; my actions will need to be in accord with the language I use to characterise those actions, hence not just *anything* can count as 'business like' behaviour (just as not just *anything* could count as religiously informed behaviour for Skinner's merchants).

McMurtry emphasises just how prevalent is the metaphorizing process from business to education (although he does not use the term 'metaphorizing'):

> Even the language of educational purpose has undergone a sea-shift of transformation into business terminology and the going discourse of the corporate culture - 'resource units' for what use to be subject disciplines and their professors; educational 'consumers' for what use to be students and learners;...'products' for

> what use to be graduates; 'buying' ideas for what use to be the search for truth. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the educational process has been so pervasively subordinated to the aims and practices of business that its agents can no longer comprehend their vocation in any other terms.
>
> (McMurtry 1991 : 211)

In this case language is changing both the sense and reference of the practice of education. It is not simply that the language is inviting a change in orientation towards something which remains the same but is actively changing the referent itself, that is, we are becoming engaged in a *different* type of practice. Hence McMurtry's use of the word 'Even' at the beginning of the quotation is slightly peculiar because such a transformation of conceptualisation would necessarily require that the language of education be suitably infused with that of the colonising practice.

McMurtry seems to view this change in language as a *consequence* of the imposition of commercial practices as if the language were simply reflecting these changes rather than recognising the active role played by the language in the bringing about of the changes. McMurtry has failed to recognise the ways in which language influences practices and therefore his comments have an air of surprise about them as if he were simply drawing attention to something else which, as a matter of fact, had also happened.

The lesson of Skinner's merchants was that language does not just reflect practice but can actively constitute the nature of practice; language is not just a passive by-product of practice but determinant of practice. Grace, who provides an informative analysis of how economic language has dominated the discussion of education, recognises the subtle way in which language operates,

> ...the incremental commodification of education has taken place at a more implicit and invisible level, generally beginning with a process of language change in which curricula are 'delivered', parents become 'consumers', and schools are assessed on 'output' characteristics. In other words the commodification of education is implied

> but not explicitly stated... This, it could be argued, would have a profoundly dehumanising and mechanising effect upon the operation of the education system.
>
> (Grace 1994 : 128 & 132)

That is, the changes in language are not simply responses to changing practice but active elements in the changes themselves; it is through the 'implicit and invisible' introduction of a particular language that the audience are encouraged to begin viewing their practice from a different perspective.

McMurtry's main point is, however, well-made and illustrates how the language of one practice is systematically transferred to that of another with the result that those involved can no longer 'comprehend their vocation in any other terms.' This also brings out the ideological nature of the process for if we have reached such a position, then the nature of education has been effectively decontested. The terms of the 'conversation' have been fixed such that anyone wishing to partake must formulate their contributions in the favoured vocabulary. Grace's reference to the 'dehumanising and mechanistic' effects of such language reinforces the decontested nature of the enterprise. The removal of human concerns and their replacement by a mechanism carries with it the idea that what we are concerned with is some technical process whose operation is subject to identifiable laws and therefore predictable and controllable. In such a situation language has only a passive role, namely that of codifying the nature of these laws and communicating them to others. The practice of education therefore becomes a technical process subject to generalisations of a scientific nature. As such the only role for discussion or conversational elements, is within the constraints of these generalisations, they represent the 'given', the framework which governs the practice. Such a process is an example of absolutism; of treating a social practice as if it were a natural practice.

The potential 'dehumanising and mechanistic' effects of language use offer a dramatic example of why attention to language is important. It might be claimed that objections to a particular type of language use or metaphorizing simply indicates a distaste or dislike for a certain sort of terminology. The objection might be dismissed as little more than a whinge but Grace's remarks supply the whinge with a philosophical edge. The words 'dehumanising' and 'mechanistic'

attempt to change what was a social practice into a technical one; one which operates according to natural principles. This, effectively, is to replace one kind of practice with another, it is to close down a practice. Any attempt to recover the practice of education as a conversational, social practice will need to employ a language which exemplifies these features of the practice. This is not an optional extra but a necessary condition for the recovery of the practice.

The extent to which educational practice is often portrayed as a technical process is sometimes difficult to over-emphasise. The growth on managerialism (which has strong links to commercialism) in education is overtly technical in its approach. As Avis points out 'At the centre of managerialism lies a technicist logic' (Avis 1996 : 110) The following example is taken from a training course aimed at teachers who wish to enter the realms of 'middle management.' When faced with a situation in which, '...people's attitudes and reactions are important' one suggested technique is that of 'Force Field Analysis' which,

> ..uses the concept of apparent immobility in given situation representing a state of dynamic tension between the needs, drives, aspiration, fears and other feelings of people involved and between technological and environmental forces...It is important in the theory that underlies this model that movement in the desired direction can most readily be achieved by reducing or removing restraining forces. Intensifying driving forces before reducing restraining forces often increases the restraining forces in reaction.
>
> (N.W.E.M.C. 1990)

This is metaphorizing with a vengeance and nicely illustrates the 'dehumanising and mechanistic' model identified by Grace. Here we are presented with a 'problem' which seems to centre around the resistance of some group of individuals to changes in their working practices (something which is only identifiable as a 'problem' given a particular perspective and it may be that the resistance is perfectly justified). However, this essentially social problem is presented as a purely technical one to be resolved by reference to a theory just as one might solve a problem in mechanics by using Newton's Laws of Motion - indeed the final sentence looks like a variant of

Newton's Third Law of Motion. The language involved is taken from physics and represents social relationships as akin to natural forces which are capable of being brought under a set of generalising statements. Its persuasive power (such that it has, which in some cases might be considerable) derives from the scientific character of the language and the neat reduction to what has the formal structure of a scientific law. The overall tenor of this approach is that people can be managed or manipulated (which is probably nearer the mark) according to laws similar to those which govern the behaviour of raw materials. The banality of such an approach would be comical if it were not so pervasive and pernicious.

What such an approach fails to recognise is the extent to which social relationships are governed by normative principles not scientific ones. Some social role relationships are fixed in that we cannot do anything about them, e.g., parents and children, siblings, others, whilst not being fixed in this sense, are nevertheless constrained in different ways e.g., teachers and pupils where each party has little or no say in who occupies the particular roles. Others, for example personal relationships, admit of a high degree of freedom. Even in the cases where the role relationship is either fixed or constrained the attitudinal relationship is more fluid and almost inevitably will evolve in a conversational manner. What the example cited above does is to ignore this conversational element and treat social relationships as if they were nothing more than a system of forces capable of being brought under an appropriate covering law.

It is not that we must eschew all metaphorical talk - a proposal that would be neither practicable or desirable - but that we need to be alive to the process of metaphorizing. Barrow remarks how he is not concerned with occasional references to '"input and output" (ugly as they may be)' but to the use of metaphor as '...major planks in argument' (Barrow op. cit. : 118). This may be to underestimate the subtle manner in which language works (cf. Grace) for the occasional use could be the Trojan Horse whose foothold once established is difficult to remove. Whilst it would be pedantic to jump on every use of language with which we disagreed, the inquiry 'Why use that word, why present the issue in that language?' is often exactly the required response because it highlights the connection between language and thought and action.

This chapter has discussed the ways in which language might function ideologically to decontest the nature of beliefs. The differences between generalisations which relate to the natural world

and those which relate to the social is important because the temptation to present aspects of the social world as if they were subject to the same constraints as elements of the natural, signals a failure to recognise the basic ontological distinction which exists between the two. This error can manifest itself when the language employed with regard to a social practice such as education, draws on or assumes a model of understanding which is essentially rooted in the scientific or technical. (The attraction of such a position was discussed in Chapter 4 in connection with Kekes' division between removable and enduring problems). Metaphors are common in education and can be highly influential in shaping both understanding and practice. However, an initial plausibility often masks an underlying misconception as to the nature of the relevant activity. Both Grace and McMurtry raise concerns regarding changes in education but only the former is sufficiently alive to the role language plays in these bringing these about. The ideological nature of these developments can be seen in their attempts to decontest the nature of education through a language which draws heavily on seeing education as a natural practice. In the final chapter I consider the case of education in more detail through a continued application the theoretical framework which has been developed in the body of the work.

CHAPTER SEVEN: LANGUAGE, IDEOLOGY AND EDUCATION

Language and Education

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate the relationship between language, ideology and the social world. The position argued for is one that recognises there are limits to 'what language can do' and tries to avoid grandiose claims which subsume everything under the power of language. The difference between using language to talk about an activity and those cases where language can be properly said to play the additional role of being constitutive of an activity, is important for maintaining this distinction. It has also been stressed that such an analysis needs to be sufficiently nuanced to take account of the differences amongst practices, in particular between natural and social practices. In some practices the function of language is predominantly to provide a means of talking about the practice e.g., engineering, although it can still influence the orientation taken towards the practice. In others, alongside its function of providing a means of talking about a practice, language actively enters into what the practice is about and shapes the character of that practice.

If we recognise this distinction, then it is a mistake to see language as merely a reflection of practice, as always a consequence of action. On such a view changes in language are simply the effects of changes in practice, as if language were a self-adjusting mechanism which responded automatically to changes in actions. It is because language enters into practice in a more dynamic fashion that attention to language is important. If language merely reflected practice then to critically analyse an activity, such as education, it would only be necessary to examine what is done. This would require language but the role of language would be to enable 'talk about the practice' to take place, that is, to facilitate communication.

However, if we adopt the more active view of language, then the critical analysis would need to examine the language itself: 'How is this language related to the actions of the practice?' 'What will be the effects of using a language like this?' 'Is this language appropriate for the practice in question?' If language can be partly constitutive of the social world then ideological language can also be constitutive of that world. The significance of ideological language is not simply that it reflects or is the outcome of distorted material practice (as Marx believed) but can be the

cause of distorted material practice. If the arguments for the constitutive nature of language have force, then the inevitable implication is that aspects of the social world can be constituted *in different ways* through the use of different types of language. Aspects of the social world which are informed by ideological language, *understood as malign decontestation, will take on a* character which is, to some degree, determined by that language. If the language is one which exhibits a systematic misunderstanding of a particular practice, then the practice will manifest that misunderstanding in both its 'doings and sayings.'

Although ideology refers primarily to beliefs, actions, 'doings', are informed by beliefs so that the resultant practical activity can be said to 'embody' ideology or to be 'ideologically' informed. It is for this reason that reservations about a particular use of language may be more than a reflection of personal taste, more than an affront to aesthetic sensitivities but a serious philosophical and practical concern regarding the nature of the social world.

The notion of practice as conversation was intended to bring out the open ended nature of practices without claiming that *all* aspects of *all* practices were conversational in character. What was argued for was the central place that conversational model played in the development of social practices where language can affect the referent not just the sense of the practice. Attempts to remove the conversational element can be either through overt repression or, far more common in liberal societies, subtle manoeuvres aimed at imposing one particular view over others, i.e., through a process of malign decontestation. In some cases one view will prevail over others because it is superior in which instances rival perspectives will naturally wither. Such examples were labelled 'benign' decontestation. Ideological thinking is to be identified with 'malign' decontestation where one view is presented as superior although the warrant for such an assertion is far less secure. Language becomes a powerful mechanism for decontestation because it provides the terms in which experience is viewed and it affects what people actually do.

The main purpose of this chapter is to apply the arguments which have been developed in the body of the work directly to some educational issues. Before looking at some recent cases of how language might function ideologically in education I want to consider an historical example,

namely, that of intelligence testing. The purpose of this is to highlight the use of language rather than any detailed discussion of 'intelligence'.

Intelligence Testing

In his introduction to the 1944 edition of Terman and Merrill's *Measuring Intelligence* E.P. Cubberly quotes approvingly from the introduction to Terman's 1916 work *The Measurement of Intelligence*. Cubberly is of the opinion that the later work is merely a fine tuning of the original which 'sets forth facts of far reaching importance, facts which it had cost him, his students, and many other scientific workers years of patient labour to accumulate' (Terman and Merrill 1944 : v).

He continues:

> The educational significance of the results to be obtained from careful measurement of the intelligence of children can hardly be overstated. Questions relating to choice of study, school room procedure, the grading of pupils, promotional schemes, the study of retardation of the children in the schools, juvenile delinquency, the proper handling of sub normals, on the one hand and gifted children on the other - all acquire new meaning and significance when viewed in the light of the measurement of intelligence as outlined in this volume...such tests give the necessary information from which a pupil's possibility of future mental growth can be foretold...the perfection of another important yardstick for evaluating educational practices...confident prediction of many students of the subject that, before long, intelligence tests will become as much a matter of necessary routine in school room procedure as a blood count is in physical diagnosis...that all classes of children, but especially the gifted and the slow, will profit from such intellectual diagnosis, there can be little question.
>
> (ibid. : v-vi)

I have quoted this at length to bring out the full flavour of Cubberly's approach to the process of measuring intelligence. The language employed is designed to convey the idea of a scientific enterprise which was capable of producing reliable knowledge on which the future education of all children could be confidently based. In response to Cubberly's opening remark, we could reply that the educational significance of 'careful intelligence testing' can very easily be overstated. This passage illustrates many of the issues discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis and warrants analysis.

The notion of intelligence being discussed is clearly ontologically dependent on the existence of human beings, 'intelligence' is not a property of the world such as 'ice', 'snow' or 'rain' which exist independently of human beings. However, the comparison with 'blood count' is highly informative because it places intelligence firmly alongside those aspects of human beings which relate to out physical properties. Our blood count is a feature of our existence over which we have no control, just as we have no control over the colour of our eyes or hair. What is being measured is therefore an objective property of human beings which exists independently of any beliefs that they may possess in relation to the matter. Intelligence as a mental property is as much an objective feature of a human being as eye or hair colour are objective physical properties of human beings. Indeed so confident were Terman and Merrill as to the ontological status of intelligence that their tables for its measurement began at an age of twenty-four months.

The passage is replete with the language of a rigorous, well-grounded scientific enterprise - 'measurement', 'yardstick', 'confident prediction', 'intellectual diagnosis', 'scientific workers', 'perfection', 'facts' etc. The perceived effects of adopting the procedures for measuring intelligence and applying them to educational practice are all encompassing; there does not appear to be any educational problem which will not find its resolution in the insights of intelligence testing. To teachers wrestling with the seemingly intractable problems of education the attraction of such a perspective is not difficult to imagine.

The account is a classic case of malign decontestation. Intelligence is presented as a property of human beings which is as objective as any physical one and fixed for life. Intelligence does not change; you are born with a certain amount and that is all you get. In other words, when we talk

about intelligence we are referring to a fixed property of individuals which can be accurately measured and from which the future education and employment prospects of that individual may be determined. The measurement of intelligence is presented as a technical problem which has now been solved by the 'patient labour of scientific workers' and solved in a way which parallels the solution to other technical mensuration problems such as the measurement of wind speed, cholesterol levels or blood pressure. The language is scientific and performs the function of enabling the practice of intelligence testing to be carried on and refined whilst assuming that what is being measured exists independently of this language, in the same way that cholesterol or hypertension exists independently of the language in which it might be discussed and measured. The 'scientific workers' will have had numerous conversations about their work but given the passage quoted above, few if any of these conversations would be questioning the objective nature of what was being measured.

Writing forty years after the first edition of *Measuring Intelligence* published in 1937, Squibb maintained that from conversations with teachers he was convinced that, ' ...very many believe I.Q. and backwardness to be objective facts, that test scores are perfectly accurate predictors and that I.Q. is fixed for life within very narrow margins' (Squibb 1977 : 81). (1). It would therefore appear that the effect of the model described by Cubberly on the minds of many practitioners had been very successful.

It is not necessary to trawl through the voluminous literature on intelligence testing to see that the views espoused by Cubberly are open to serious criticism. As a decontesting strategy it attempts to fix the reference of intelligence as whatever is measured by the tests devised by Terman and Merrily, in other words, '*This* is what intelligence is.' There is no opportunity for conversation regarding the nature of intelligence if it is fixed in this way. It also attempts to fix the sense that intelligence has for us; the implication is that intelligence is to be seen as a property of those people who perform well on intelligence test. This has the result of bringing into question or undermining everyday uses of the word 'intelligence' which may be applied to individuals who perform poorly on these tests or, more likely, have never been subjected to such measurements. Cubberly et. al. present themselves as the experts discussed by Burge who can fix the meaning that words are to have and thus engage in the process of correcting those who use

words in the wrong way. The claimed 'expertise' even shows itself in the strict conditions under which testing must take place, '...parents should be instructed to keep in the background, allowing the examiner to manage the situation and child in his own way' (ibid. : 69). The mistake is to see intelligence as some free standing property of individuals *which is fixed for life* rather than a complex notion partly constructed by the beliefs people have regarding its nature.

If we accept that intelligence is what is measured by such tests then to use an expression such as 'intelligent footballer' is to suggest a purely contingent relationship for whether the footballer is intelligent or not will depend on his score on Terman and Merrill's tests not any performance on the field. If we introduce the idea that there are different kinds of intelligence then why should we give any more credence to what is measured by psychometric tests than the more everyday uses of the word and, importantly, why should the results of these tests be thought so crucial in determining anyone's future education and employment prospects?

To describe this account of intelligence as ideological is not to impugn any sinister to motives to the authors but to recognise that it attempts to decontest a concept through ontological confusion and what amounts to no more than a stipulative definition. It seeks to generalise a particular perspective and privilege it over all others: it is, in essence, a case of absolutism for 'intelligence' is presented as a natural property of human beings and something which is fixed for life. As Marx pointed out ideologists can be ideologists by design or default. (2).

It is because intelligence is presented as a quantifiable, natural property of human beings and there exists some covering theory which enables knowledge of the antecedent conditions to be extrapolated, that generalisations as to the future prospects of children and the correct solutions to educational problems, can be forthcoming. The scientific language is what gives the claims legitimacy although what is being generalised is one, narrow view of what intelligence might be. Terman and Merrill obviously believed that their account of intelligence was the only one of any significance and hence felt confident that the generalising claims made for it were perfectly reasonable. The effects on individual lives and on the structure of education, of adopting wholesale a position such as this are well-known although the widespread use of intelligence tests continued throughout the 1960's and 70's. As Squibb's remarks indicate, the validity of such tests was 'taken-for-granted' by many of those involved with education despite the substantial

theoretical and social misgivings which attached to them. The need to apply critical awareness, to be critical of the assumptions underlying the whole process, was either lacking or insufficiently appreciated.

Changes in language can occur naturally: words fall out of fashion, new terms are coined, established words may be applied to new contexts etc. On the other hand there can be an orchestrated effort to impose a changed vocabulary on a practice. Given the arguments which have been made above regarding the ways in which language can be seen as constitutive of some aspects of social reality, such changes to language cannot simply be dismissed as having a merely cosmetic or ephemeral character. Attention to developments in the use of language are important because they will have effects on the nature of the practice. This is particularly so when there are attempts to decontest certain beliefs by an insistence that only one perspective is legitimate.

As an example, consider Wilson's claim that, '...unless actual situations become child-centred they cannot become educational...traditional practices are not educational at all, to the extent that they are not child-centred' (Wilson 1969 : 120 & 124). Here Wilson is identifying education with one approach to education, child-centredness, and by implication, explicitly rejecting all and any alternative perspectives: a practice can only legitimately call itself 'educational' if it adheres to the principles of child-centredness. Other approaches such as traditionalism, vocationalism and even some versions of liberal education, do not, in Wilson's view, constitute educational practices at all to the extent that they diverge from his version of child-centredness. Wilson's claim is a universalising one which attempts define 'education' by invoking one particular view of education and generalising that perspective. As such it constitutes an ideological claim because it attempts to decontest the nature of education by ignoring legitimate alternative perspectives in favour of one sectional view. This is not to say that child-centred education has no value, it clearly does, but so do the other approaches which Wilson wishes to remove from the realm of 'education.' What makes Wilson's position ideological is his universalising of one perspective and dismissal of all others. It is a feature of ideological thinking

that because it universalises one perspective it must be against all other perspectives: one cannot have two or three universalised positions existing side-by-side.

Child-centred education employs a language rich in maxims and aphorisms (several of which are rather hackneyed and little more than educational clichés) however, this language is central to the philosophy of child-centred education. (3). The language does not simply reflect child-centred practice but is constitutive of the practice; it guides and shapes the practice. If you describe your practice in this way, then you are bound to act in certain ways: the 'doings and the sayings' are inextricably joined together. Wilson's attempt to decontest the nature of education in favour of child-centred methods suggests that this view of education is in some sense 'complete', that is, it represents a perspective from which all educational problems are to be understood and, presumably, solved.

Scruton points out how the Plowden Report '...seemed to promise solutions to problems which were otherwise intractable ...through the furnishing of, ...simple explanations and simple remedies...' (Scruton 1987 : 39 & 40). Alexander is even more scathing describing the language of child-centredness as a vocabulary which, '..lulls and cradles, suggesting a romantic conception of the natural order...a pot-pourri of firelight and warmth against the cold night...[it is a language with]...a direct appeal to anti-intellectualism and "gut" reactions' (Alexander 1984 : 17 & 18).

Oelkers, in a discussion of slogans in education, points out that they,

> ...assert with emotive certitude the superiority of the position they represent over all competing positions, and at the same time the practical realisation of the position is made out to be immediately attainable. No slogan ensures efficacy, but every one supposes the best education...Intentions must therefore appear to be general *and* exclusive.
>
> (Oelkers 1997 : 128)

Given that slogans inevitably 'simplify and popularise to catch phrases what are complex theories' (ibid. : 128), their ideological nature becomes apparent. By 'simplifying and

popularising', slogans deal only with the surface features of phenomena and must fail to do justice to the 'complex theories' to which they give (limited) expression. They are thus insufficiently critical of the assumptions which under underlie their articulation and generalise what is a particular perspective. The promise of providing ready solutions to difficult questions provides a cosmetic appeal to those whose daily experiences revolve around the need to deal with such difficulties. The effect of such sloganising is to attempt a decontestation of an area through the promotion of one view as superior to all others: to be general *and* exclusive.

Claims to decontest, if they are to have any chance of success, must show themselves as preferable to whatever else is on offer and one way of doing this is through a language which makes an appeal to the emotions rather than the intellect. Alexander speaks of the language of child-centred education as '...the verbal expression of an ideology...' (op. cit. : 15), which it is, but he fails to appreciate that the language is not simply articulating a set of already held, clearly formulated beliefs and practices. The language functions to give expression to the beliefs but it also shapes and moulds those beliefs and the actions which stem from them. For a teacher with child-centred leanings, the language of child-centredness is not an optional extra but integral to being that kind of teacher.

Within education there are macro and micro issues. Macro issues would include those pertaining to national policies or general debates regarding the nature of education. Micro issues might refer to classroom practice, the organisation of particular schools or the relationships established between teachers and pupils. Such a division is slightly artificial because the two areas feed into each other: policy decisions and reflections on the nature of education have implications for classroom practice and aspects of classroom practice or school organisation can inform larger policy decisions.

There can be little doubt that the introduction of a compulsory curriculum and the more recent initiatives of the literacy and numeracy hours, have had a dramatic effect on the character of (particularly) primary education. Education is unusual in that its development is influenced by a variety of factors. Some are clearly economic, as in the desire to produce a workforce which is computer literate and possesses the skills necessary to become (economically) productive

members of society. Others may be social as when there is a need to provide specific help for disadvantaged groups. There may also be attempts to use education as a means of promoting cultural identity (see Beck 1998 : 22-30).

Alongside these influences there are those which arise from what might broadly be described as the academic disciplines, notably; psychology, philosophy, sociology and history. These 'foundation disciplines' are now almost completely absent from the training of teachers, are less and less the subject of post-graduate studies and, consequently, increasingly marginalised in educational debate. Their reduced profile has been paralleled by the rapid rise of education, and especially teaching, as a technical activity. These disciplines have a long history and offer distinctive perspectives on the process of education. They are also conversational in nature and function as an important resource for anyone wishing to gain a wider understanding of the debates which have informed thinking on education over the years. They also provide (as was mentioned in chapter 5) a critical framework for the evaluation of present day practices. Their demise, almost entirely as a result of government policies, serves to characterise the process of education as one whose historical and intellectual antecedents are of little or no relevance to present day concerns: it is in effect to deny that education has an intellectual history. This denial amounts to regarding past conversations regarding education and their present day counterparts, as irrelevant baggage for an understanding of contemporary education. The assumption must be that there is nothing of any value to be learned from such study. Education is conceived as a natural practice not a social practice. The difference can be seen by considering the following comparison.

Engineering students, i.e., people learning about a natural practice, are not taught about steam engines because they have been superseded by other engines: learning about steam engines would be something you might do in your spare time. If engineering students spent most of their time learning about steam engines and nothing about diesel or petrol engines, then they could legitimately complain that their course was irrelevant to present day needs. Because engineering is a technical activity designed to solve problems regarding the construction of physical artefacts, as better solutions appear they naturally signal the demise of previous solutions: no one is going to return to using steam engines as commercial sources of power. In addition, how

steam engines work is not contestable: we can safely put the issue of steam engines on the historical shelf to be consulted only by those who seek a light diversion or are, as it happens, interested in their operation.

Education is different because it is not a technical enterprise. However, to deny that education has an intellectual history is to make it look as if it is a technical enterprise where what has gone on in the past is no more relevant to present educational concerns than the steam engine is to present engineering concerns. In education there are basic issues with which any inquiry into its nature must engage: 'What should we teach?', 'How should we teach?', 'What ought to be the aims of education?', 'What sort of society should we educate for?' 'How should we treat children?' These are not optional extras for anyone seriously concerned with education, they are not simply topics that someone might ponder in their spare time after producing their maths worksheets, but central to the whole project. They are not technical questions such that it is possible to arrive at an answer which will attract the consent of all involved, rather they are questions to which a variety of responses will be forthcoming. Unlike the workings of the steam engine, these questions cannot be safely shelved on the grounds that there is nothing left to say about them. Far from being uncontested they are highly contestable issues.

The intellectual history of education is the history of proposed solutions to just such questions and as such they represent not peripheral trivialities but the core nature of the activity. The 'de-professionalisation' of education, which has been the subject of much debate over recent years, has paralleled the denial that education has a conversational intellectual history. To deny the conversational history of education is to marginalise issues which deal with the central features of educational practice and replace them with a different set of concerns. That they have been replaced is fairly evident and a change in the language of education has been a significant factor in this change. One area of rapid growth has been the increased use of 'performance indicators' as a means of judging the 'quality' of teachers and their schools. This has significant implications both for micro issues such as the exchanges which take place between individual teachers and pupils and macro issues such as the nature of teacher professionalism. I will consider the growth of performativity first and then examine the changing nature of professionalism.

The language of 'performativity'

The following discussion needs to be considered in the light of the theoretical analysis presented in the preceding chapters where a central concern has been to argue for seeing language as having a constitutive role to play in shaping certain aspects of the social world. The difference between natural and social practices outlined in Chapter 5 with regard to the role of language, emphasised that in the latter case language could 'enter into that which it was about' and have a creative function. Natural practices restrict the possible effects of language because their subject matter is independent of language. Education is a social practice which takes place amongst human beings not between human beings and some independently existing reality. How we understand education exchanges is determined by whether we see education as a natural or a social practice. The tendency in performativity is to view education as a natural practice and the exchanges which take place as analogous to natural processes. This lends itself to viewing such exchanges as exhibiting regularities which can be the subject of law-like generalisations. The language of performativity encourages such a perspective carrying, as it does, the notion of a technical enterprise with clearly definable aims, processes and standards. Such a perspective not only misunderstands the nature of education at the theoretical level but also has detrimental effects on the way the practical aspects of the practice are conducted.

In a comment on a paper by Michael Barber and Judy Sebba (Barber & Sebba 1999), Michael Fielding criticises both the adoption of the language of 'perfomativity' in education and the failure of those who object to such language to retain a '...more ethically nuanced language of education to express what is important to us as teachers and learners' (Fielding 1999a : 176). Fielding points out that Barber and Sebba's article in 'saturated with metaphors of the market' (ibid. : 176) and identifies the key objection to such language, namely, that because language is constitutive of practice, adopting a particular language has significant implications for the nature of that practice. To counteract the pervasive encroachment of perfomativity we need to stop using its language. He writes:

> If we began to talk to each other in a language that is more attuned to the intellectual and emotional realities which we now all face, we would begin to think and feel differently about what we do and why we do it.
>
> (ibid. : 176)

Although he makes no reference to writers such as Taylor and Skinner, the central thrust of his argument is very similar, namely, that how we perceive and understand what we do *and what we actually do* is influenced by the language we employ. Consequently, if we use the language of performativity and see teachers as 'people in front line services' or reduce complex notions of professional practice to 'the effective management of performance', then this will have far reaching effects on how we view the whole process of education.

Performativity brings with it the attendant language of 'targets', 'standards', 'accountability', 'league tables' etc. and once this language becomes dominant, as it has, then the practice of education is shaped and moulded in its image. The emphasis is on the quantifiable and the pressure on teachers is to make sure their performance, and that of their pupils, meets the standards or targets which have been identified (by neither the teachers nor the students) as criterial for 'effective' teaching. The results are a distortion of the process of education which is nicely captured by Fielding's question:

> How many teachers, particularly those of younger children, are now able to listen openly, attentively and in a non-instrumental, exploratory way to their children/students without feeling guilty, stressed or vaguely uncomfortable about the absence of criteria or the insistence of a target tugging at their sleeve?
>
> (Fielding 1999b : 280)

If this is the case, then it is, to a significant degree, the direct result of using a particular kind of language. One might almost have predicted that if the language of performativity became dominant then it would radically alter the nature of educational relationships. However, this is not just some contingent occurrence but a consequence of language 'entering into that which it is

about.' Language and reality are bound up together such that each informs the other and a language which is based on the technical notion of performativity, will skew educational practice in a particular direction.

What Fielding's example does is portray an impoverished educational situation; a situation where the elements of conversational exchange are absent having been replaced by extraneous imperatives of neither the child's nor teacher's making. The notion of an educational exchange as being open, exploratory and conversational is replaced by one where the need of the teacher is to transmit to the child a set of pre-specified 'learning objectives' rather than engage in any genuine dialogue. The educational exchange begins to resemble one which is fully scripted and allows for no deviation. The extent to which such a process has imposed itself on education is brought out by Katz in a discussion of how young children are taught:

> It seems to me that early childhood programmes are increasingly in danger of being modelled on the corporate/industrial or factory model that is so pervasive in elementary and secondary levels of education...factories are designed to transform raw material into pre-specified products by treating it to a sequence of pre-specified standard processes.
>
> (Katz 1993 : 33-34)

The metaphor here is of the school as a factory with its 'inputs' or raw material which are then subjected to a 'standard process' which results in (suitably quality controlled), 'outputs'. This is to see education as a purely technical process whose aim is the transformation of base material into some pre-specified end product. The factory metaphor has been around for some time but it is a metaphor which, in modified forms but always drawing on a business/commercial model, has been very influential in educational thinking and practice.

However, it radically misconstrues the nature of education not least in its assumption that there is *an* end product for education but more significantly in the absolutism which informs the model. Education is understood as a natural practice where the only difference from other natural practices, is that the raw material to be worked is human rather than simply vegetable

or mineral. Katz's reference to 'standard processes' assumes that all children learn in the same way, need to learn the same things and that the central method of education is that they have things 'done to them' in accordance with some already decided set of procedures. There is also an assumption built into this model which fails to allow for the fact that the children involved may have something of their own to contribute to their education.

Once education is conceived as a process aimed at the manipulation of raw material according to some pre-specified standards and given the demands of performativity mentioned above, it is little wonder that the relationships between teachers and pupils become largely instrumental geared towards the achievement of a set of narrow goals. Conversations in this atmosphere are bound to be dominated by the teacher's needs and controlled in the light of them rather than being a genuine joint enterprise.

Ideological thought generalises a particular perspective and is exclusive in that it ignores other legitimate view points, so the question is 'What does an account of education such as the one described above omit?'

Bonnett, in a sophisticated defence of child-centred approaches to education, distinguishes between what he terms 'calculative' thinking and 'poetic' thinking (*Bonnett 1994 : esp. 128-144*). Both these types of thinking represent different ways of relating to the world: the calculative is essentially manipulative in that it seeks to '...explain, predict, evaluate, and control the environment...' whereas the poetic is receptive and stems from a desire to see '*...things as they are in themselves*' (ibid. : 129). Drawing on Heidegger, Bonnett sees the calculative as viewing 'things' as 'objects' to be classified, ordered, exploited for our own purposes rather than appreciating 'things' for what they are in themselves, of staying with things 'in their inherent strangeness' (ibid. : 134). As Bonnett remarks, there can be little doubt that in education it is the calculative mode which is in the ascendant to the extent that it marks out the poetic as not only unfamiliar but no more than a '...frothy irrelevance to the real business of life' (ibid. : 134).

What the poetic requires is an open, receptive, non-manipulative stance rather than one which is always seeking to analyse and manipulate. What becomes important is allowing ourselves the time to consider the significance things have for us, not to simply continue gaining more and

more information on some topic but to reflect on the meaning of what we already know and have experienced. (The antithesis of this approach is the 'clipboard at the zoo/art gallery' phenomena where children rush around filling in boxes rather than appreciating the experience of being six feet from a fully grown tiger or some artistic masterpiece: completing the worksheet becomes the priority). The language of the poetic is one of 'celebration', 'awe', curiosity', mystery', wonder', 'attunement', 'revelation', 'receptivity', 'strangeness'. As Bonnett comments, a teacher who valued the poetic would give,

> ...ample time to simply experience, celebrate, and express such ways of relating to such things before they get incorporated into some cosy classification or computer data-base which neutralises their particularity and tranquillizes their strangeness, by turning them into instances of generalities.
>
> (ibid. : 140)

Bonnett's discussion of the poetic is linked to his notion of authenticity which stresses the importance in education of children engaging with what seriously occupies them; that which has personal significance or 'subjective weight' for it is only in such circumstances that 'real learning' can occur. Central to this process is the teacher-pupil relationship which involves 'empathetic challenging' and the teacher and pupil engaging in '...genuine (*i.e. open*) conversations...' (ibid.: 140).

It is precisely an idea such as poetic thinking that the models of education criticised by Fielding and Katz fails to acknowledge. The language of performativity, targets, standards and league tables forces teachers into a position where the time to provide the experiences which poetic thinking requires is seen as a waste of time or something of a luxury. But the time constraint is not the major problem: the major problem is that a practice informed by the language of performativity, a practice which generalises the perspective which such a view informs, cannot allow for the language of poetic thinking and the kinds of activities which it entails. To see education as involving poetic thinking and the types of relationships which it requires, it is necessary to think and speak in that language. For example, to see potential educational

experiences in terms of 'strangeness', 'mystery' and 'receptivity' is to see that such things cannot be packaged into discrete bits of information to be transmitted from teacher to pupil. They also present formidable problems for a crucial aspect of performativity, namely, the assessment of performance: how, exactly, is a child's performance in poetic thinking to be objectively measured?

In an education system which is dominated by the need to measure children's learning or performance, the development of those capacities and dispositions characteristic of poetic thinking, strenuously resist attempts as quantification. When combined with notions of authenticity and subjective weight, the whole nature of the relationship between teacher and pupil is transformed from one of uni-directional instruction to one of dynamic interaction: from a fully scripted conversation to one which is genuinely open, exploratory and significant. If 'real learning' is that learning which genuinely engages with the concerns of children then only under carefully constructed conditions will a child be able to authentically articulate what those concerns may be. The language of performance, targets and pre-specified objectives leaves little or no room for these concerns to enter into the educational process and sets a tenor to the proceedings which emphasises the need to 'get on' with the real business of moulding the raw material. There is a notion of 'busyness' at play which sees activity as an end in itself with no regard as to the value of whatever is being done. (This is rather like the football manager who commends the 'work rate' of a player when the individual concerned has had no significant influence on the game but has expended a good deal of energy running around the pitch).

Bonnett carefully avoids the charge that his own position is ideological by acknowledging the essential role that calculative thinking plays in life and therefore he doesn't seek to universalise the poetic as the *only* stance one can, or ought, take towards the world. If the notion of the poetic has value, then its exclusion must lead to an impoverished educational experience for children. To reclaim the poetic or to argue for its inclusion, it is necessary to speak its language for at least two reasons.

The first reason is that it represents a case the more nuanced language advocated by Fielding and by using this kind of language one's perspective on education will inevitably be altered. Just like Skinner's merchants, anyone who uses the language of the poetic will need to 'tailor their

projects' in a certain manner; their behaviour, 'doings', will need to be in concert with the language of the poetic. The language will not simply provide a way of 'talking about the practice' but actively shapes and moulds what the practice will be. To borrow a comparison from Wittgenstein, the educational practice of the user of poetic language is different from the educational practice of the user of performative language.

The second reason for using the language of the poetic returns to a point brought out by the discussion of Taylor's example of 'envy' in Chapter 3. Taylor argues that coming up with the right word, 'envy', is the right word because of what it does, namely, it both articulates my feelings and shapes them in a certain manner. The word 'envy' allows me to correctly situate what it is that I am feeling in my emotional lexicon and consequently clarifies what it is that I am feeling. Bonnett rightly points out that the language of the poetic is 'unfamiliar', consequently there is a similar process to be undertaken with regard to the language of the poetic. The lexicon of the poetic and the experiences to which they relate - 'awe', 'strangeness', 'wonder', 'mystery' etc. - may well be understood by a process not dissimilar to Taylor's account of envy. For example, to know that you are feeling 'awe' as opposed to, say, 'fear' or 'trepidation' may be conditional upon coming up with the word 'awe' in a the certain situation. Faced with The Grand Canyon I have a feeling of some sort that is hard to identify: I come up with the word 'awe' and this not only articulates what I am experiencing but at the same time shapes it in a certain way; clarifies what I am feeling so that having come up with the right word, my experience is different from what it was previously. This is something which is learnt and therefore introducing children to the nature of poetic thinking is to introduce them to the nature of poetic language.

The effect of the language of performativity is not simply to exclude aspects of experience such as poetic thinking from education, it is also corrosive of what could be termed 'genuine' calculative thinking. Calculative thinking is certainly dominant in present day education but that it should be present to some degree is essential because such thinking is an important means of understanding key aspects of the world. (When the washing machine breaks down we want someone who can quickly diagnose the problem and rectify it not someone who wishes to appreciate the machine for its 'strangeness' and 'mystery'). The sorts of qualities associated

with calculative thinking - ordering, classifying, analysing, predicting, testing, objectivity etc. - are fundamental to many areas of intellectual inquiry. Facilitating the acquisition of such abilities is a central task of education. However, coming to understand and develop such capacities requires conditions which are not unlike those which foster the poetic. Children need time to build up their understanding and the opportunity to engage in open conversations with teachers and other pupils. They need to ask for clarifications, pursue lines of thought, reflect on the significance of what they know, speculate, clear up misunderstandings, raise questions etc. In other words, they need to be able to engage in genuine educational dialogues rather than simply be on the receiving end of information and instruction.

Recent research suggests that there has been a noticeable shift in teachers' attitudes where the notion of 'covering the material' has become more important than developing the children's learning. Triggs and Pollard identify the following all too common situation,

> ...the children have a sense of time as a scarce resource. They were aware of the pressure to 'get things done'; felt there was not enough time to do things properly, not enough time for them to learn as they would like, often not as much time as their teachers might like to give them. The were being urged to hurry up and learn because it was necessary to 'get on'.
>
> (Triggs & Pollard 1998 : 112)

As Dadds comments, the competition between coverage and understanding is one of the most peculiar tensions to have emerged during the last ten years and has led to, '...an over-emphasis on convergent teaching led by pre-determined objectives' (Dadds 1998 : 4).

In such cases the pressure imposed by the architectonic of performativity can be seen as moving the educational relationship in a direction which, if Triggs and Pollard are to be believed, suits neither the teachers nor their pupils. The 'busyness' mentioned above is particularly stark in the passage from Triggs and Pollard where the whole educational experience seems to have been infected by a concern to 'get on' with things. In such situations the conditions of open conversation and engagement are seriously curtailed and, consequently,

so are the children's opportunities to develop their understanding and learning. The effect of performativity is not, therefore, limited to excluding notions such as the poetic but also distorts the character of what is included. In effect, the development of calculative thinking will suffer in these circumstances because many children and their teachers will not have the time or opportunity to engage in the sorts of educational transactions which are productive of understanding and learning.

Although several writers on education have criticised the language of performativity and metaphors drawn from the market place (e.g. Bottery 1988, 1989, Blenkin et. al. 1992, Hartley 1997), they often seem to underplay the role that language has in constituting the nature of educational practices; they fail to adequately understand the social ontology at play. The effects described by Triggs and Pollard are the results of real pressures put on teachers and pupils to 'meet certain targets' etc. but the social reality they find themselves engaged in, is partly constituted by the language which is used. Once teachers or educationalists start to use that language themselves then they significantly strengthen the control which the language exercises over their behaviour. Effective resistance to initiatives such as performativity is, in a large part, facilitated by a refusal to speak its language. Fielding's complaint about the failure of those involved in education to retain a language which more fully encapsulates the nature of educational exchanges can be seen as more than a personal dislike for a particular vocabulary but acknowledging the extent to which language is constitutive of the practice itself.

The language of performativity can be seen as ideological because it seeks to universalise what is a particular perspective at the expense of others. It is a malign decontesting strategy in that it not only rules out important notions of educational experience, e.g. the poetic, but is also corrosive of what remains. What we end up with is a distorted or impoverished account of education whose results are the prioritisation of pre-specified targets over the genuine development of children's learning. The effect on the relationships between teachers and pupils is to replace the potential for interactive dialogue with monologue.

Teaching as a profession

The idea that teaching is a profession as opposed to just a job, has long been advocated by both teachers and those who employ them. The changes which have taken place in education over the last ten years have, however, raised questions about what being a 'professional' actually involves. The discussion of performativity illustrated how the nature of teaching has changed and yet teachers and employers still want to retain the notion that teaching is a profession. Given these altered circumstances, what has happened is that a new account of professionalism has begun to emerge. The new account attempts to reduce any discord with recent changes in practice by suitably altering perceptions of professionalism. This change has partly been achieved by the replacement of one set of vocabulary with another.

Writing in the mid 1980s, Bailey, although cognisant of the changes being mooted in the background, could still claim that a liberal educator,

> **...must be accountable only in the sense that he or she is acting professionally *as* a liberal educator ...the conception of accountability...is that of the relatively autonomous teacher, actively involved as a liberal educator, and accountable as a professional expert in the field of liberal education.**
>
> **(Bailey 1984 : 236)**

On this view the notion of being a 'professional' is linked directly to a set of educational principles, namely, those which constitute the nature of liberal education. What such a teacher could not do would be to consider their role as that of, '..an agent for someone else's decision-making, especially where such another was not a professional educator' (ibid. : 237). Pring defines 'professional' as a term which,

> **...indicates a degree of autonomy in the exercise of judgement and in the shaping of practice. The claim to be a profession is a claim for that autonomy to be recognised within society, such that the powers of others (of Government and of the client) are thereby limited.**
>
> **(Pring 1993 : 9)**

It could be argued that the present condition is one far removed from either Bailey's or Pring's account of what it is to be a professional teacher: there is far less autonomy for teachers and many may feel that they are little more than functionaries executing the dictats of others who are not themselves professional educators.

Bailey's account of liberal education centres around the idea that what education should be *for* and proposes that it is the fostering of 'intellectual and moral autonomy' (ibid. : 21). This is achieved primarily through the use of reason, open evidential teaching, a curriculum which deals with that which is fundamental and general and a concern for the intrinsically worthwhile rather than the solely utilitarian (ibid. : 26). It also has a regard for the moral and social development of children with an emphasis on their need to become independent choosers, that is, autonomous individuals. The 'moral and intellectual autonomy' which Bailey describes is as much applicable to teachers as to those they teach and the liberal educator is seen as someone who possesses a degree of independence of judgement, particularly from governmental or commercial interests.

The notion of being professional is tied intimately to a set of principles and values which inform a view of education and it is to these that the professional liberal educator is, ultimately, accountable. As such, the vocabulary of professionalism for the liberal educator is one which refers to 'autonomy', 'reason', 'judgement', 'open, evidential teaching', 'learning which is intrinsically worthwhile' etc. There is also a strong ethical basis to this approach in that it sees education as an intrinsic good rather than simply a means to an end, and is concerned with the development of individual capacities such as autonomy, self-realization and moral character.

Given this view of what education entails, the professional teacher is one who is also an *educated* teacher in the sense that they have some knowledge and understanding of the theoretical justifications which might be used to support such a position. The professional in this sense is someone who has, in some more or less rigorous use of the term, a 'philosophy' of education where this may mean no more than a set of reasoned principles which inform their actions. Being a professional in this sense is therefore more than simply learning a set of techniques or 'skills' which can then be applied to a variety of situations. The professional in this sense is not one who simply subjects individuals to 'standard processes' but recognises and

responds to an individual's particular needs and abilities. The professional is required to exercise a large amount of personal judgement in their teaching and to have integrity.

The change in the meaning of 'professionalism' from that outlined by Bailey and Pring, is characterised by a *reduction of professional autonomy and an increasingly technical approach* to the educational process. Language is important here. The 'preparation' of students to become teachers is currently overseen by an institution called the Teacher Training Authority (T.T.A.): this could have been titled the Teacher Education Authority, but wasn't. The use of the word 'training' is significant as John Patten indicated back in 1993, '...we are ensuring that teacher *training is precisely that, training* -undertaken as much as possible in the school-and not wasted studying dated and irrelevant texts on theory.' (my emphasis) (quoted by Moore, Moore 1994 : 33).

As Moore points out, given that no one would seriously suggest that students spend their time studying 'dated and irrelevant texts' the implication would seem to be that students dispense with theory *per se*. Patten's use of the word 'training' and his reinforcement that teacher training is 'precisely that' puts a distinctive slant on what it is that is required of those who wish to become teachers. 'Training' is the only type of teacher preparation which is to be available, that is, Patten is universalising one approach and claiming that there are no other legitimate possibilities (such as that proposed by Bailey). The nature of teaching is being decontested by privileging one account over all others.

At this time the move to divorce teacher education from institutions of higher education was gaining impetus (including Patten's infamous 'Mums Army') and the belief was that learning to teach was best learnt 'on the job' with little or no need for any contributions from academic bodies. Without labouring the point, it is clear that the terms 'training' and 'educating' connote different activities, although there may be some overlap. However, animals are trained, never educated. 'Training' carries with it the notion of some identifiable end point which is being aimed for along with a set of procedures which will achieve that end. Events since 1993 have tended to bear out Patten's views with the preparation of students for teaching and the 'professional development' of teachers themselves being more and more centred around the notion of training.

Beck, drawing on some recent work by Basil Bernstein, identifies *trainability* as the key notion in the re-formulation of the idea of professionalism: *'Trainability'* is the capacity '...ideally *internalised as a need* - '*to* profit from continuous pedagogic re-formations', designed to equip the individual to cope effectively with the accelerating pace of externally imposed changes' (Beck 1999 : 228) The training of teachers has become, '...strongly competency based and highly specific - formulated as lists of closely prescribed behaviours which competent practitioners must display, and in relation to which their professional progress is assessed' (ibid. : 228).

The 'professional' is now he or she who is able to master specific patterns of behaviour and is ultimately pliable to the demands of the government, the market or any other agencies which are deemed to have authority e.g., OFSTED or the T.T.A. In such situations allegiance to a set of educational principles such as those of liberal education or child-centredness, might be seen as being lamentably old fashioned or an act of wilful obstruction. What was once seen as a sign of professional integrity becomes an impediment to the smooth operation of the educational process.

The denial of education's intellectual history is again at play in this approach. It is no accident that Patten's (and others e.g., Kenneth Clarke's use of the term 'barmy theory' in relation to education) dismissal of theory is yoked to an advocacy of training. The suggestion is that teachers do not need to think about what they are doing except in the sense that their thinking is aimed at the efficient performance of their allotted tasks. If student teachers and, increasingly, those in schools, have no knowledge of the conversations which have gone on about education over the last two thousand *or so years, then any potential* resistance to present initiatives is decreased. The language of the new professionalism is one which views education as a technical exercise based on a set of discrete actions geared towards the achievement of specific ends. This is in stark contrast to the view that teachers might be involved in a practice which involves the exercise of personal judgement and the ability to situate their own activity in the wider context of human intellectual history.

The notion of 'flexibility' is also high on the agenda but whereas flexibility can be a virtue in some circumstances, its meaning here is more one of malleability, of being quick to respond to changes in demand with little inclination to raise questions regarding the desirability or

legitimacy of that which is being demanded. The language which informs this new .professionalism is one which shares many of the features identified in the discussion of performativity. Just as performativity was shown to be corrosive of the educational exchanges between teachers and pupils, so the new professionalism seeks to establish a relationship between teachers and those who control education which mimics the distorted teacher- pupil relationship. The children are the raw material to be moulded by the teachers and the teachers are there to be moulded by the government, OFSTED, the T.T.A. or whatever other body is deemed appropriate.

Pring, who is alive to the role that language plays in the development of social practices, recalls hearing education described as a '...conversation between the generations of mankind in which the young were introduced to the voice of poetry, of philosophy, of science, of history' (Pring op. cit. : 10). He then asks whether *this* social practice is the *same* as one which is informed by the language of the market and commerce, reaching the conclusion that it may not be legitimate to refer to the latter as a 'professional practice' in the sense that he understands the term (ibid. : 10). Although some of the effects of the language of the market have been discussed above and in Chapter 6, it is worth dwelling on the possible implications for the 'new professional'.

The new professional is one who is flexible, can effectively deliver the curriculum and, perhaps most importantly, has no theoretical baggage to impair his or her performance. The recent introduction of performance pay, 'super teachers' and a new career structure based on National Professional Qualifications, where advancement is *only* possible via the satisfactory completion of a set of nationally prescribed standards, serves to consolidate the competitive, market governed nature of education. The professional teacher is the marketable teacher but such a self is one who lacks an inner core or attachment to substantial values. Bernstein refers to such a self as one orientated towards a perpetually 'pedagogised future' in which others determine its destiny and purpose (Bernstein in Beck 1999 : 228). This vacuum is to be filled by the acquisition of consumerist signifiers of worth, namely, money and/or status. The motivating forces for teaching are thus are radically severed from the activity itself (seen as some belief in the intrinsic value of education) and replaced by a set rewards extrinsic to the practice. This is an inevitable outcome of the language of the market and the new professionalism which it has

produced. (The position is not unlike when the term 'true professional' is used of a politician, the implication being that here is someone with *no substantial* beliefs or values of their own but whose keen antennae enable them to be always seen to be proclaiming the current creed).

In a market a product's worth is quantifiable in terms of the revenue it generates for its maker. If a product fails to attract buyers it is replaced with another which, it is hoped, will be more attractive to the customers. Markets need to be flexible, identify emerging trends, keep their customers by creating a dependence on their products etc. In a market the notion of intrinsic value is redundant because value is a function of customer wants. Markets are also secretive: knowledge is not shared out for the benefit of others but jealously guarded. Sales figures are king.

The new professional is a 'human resource' to be used in whatever ways, within limits, are seen as appropriate by others. The term 'human resource' suggests a notion of exploitation, of something or someone who may be used for purposes which are not their own: resources are manipulated, shaped, used up but never asked for their opinion. Can a human resource be autonomous? The tension between the two ideas indicates that the dehumanising nature of the former sits uneasily with our normal understanding of the latter. The new professional is seen as someone who can fulfil a need, carry out a task, exercise 'skills' but only so long as the nature and purpose of these demands is decided by others. So entrenched has this model become that, outside certain academic institutions, it is the only language in which education is discussed. Its success has been in a large part facilitated by the colonisation of the appropriate language. It is ideological in that it represents a stark case of malign decontestation. One perspective of what education and teaching are has been universalised at the expense of all alternatives. The conversational mode has been replaced by one which largely rejects the need for dialogue in favour of imposition.

Conclusion

Although the examples considered in the thesis have been largely drawn from education the theoretical position argued for has wider applications. Once the constitutive nature of language is appreciated then attention to the language which we use in relation to many social activities takes on greater significance. The notion of ideology is often conceived as pertaining exclusively to pōlitical issues but there is a more extensive role for it to play when formulated in terms of malign decontestation. Because language is such an integral part of our lives and we are so familiar with it, there is a tendency to underestimate the degree to which it structures aspects of our experience and the social world we inhabit. We are so 'plugged into' language that we sometimes fail to be sufficiently aware of the subtle ways in which it influences our thoughts and actions. The aim of this thesis has been to examine ways in which language and reality might be related and, more specifically, the extent to which language moulds and shapes aspects of the social world. In the light of this the potential for language to function ideologically takes on added weight and reveals itself as a topic of both theoretical and practical significance.

NOTES

1. Reinforced no doubt by the standard introductory textbooks of the time which continued to present accounts similar to that of Cubberly. See, for example, Lovell (1969), Thompson (1968) Miller (1969).

2. Although there is much evidence that the uses made of intelligence testing by some researchers and commentators was motivated by sinister aims. See, for example, papers by Henderson and Karier in Dale et. al. (1976)

3. Phrases such as 'Experience, not curriculum', 'Child, not curriculum' , 'We teach children not subjects', 'At the heart of the educational process lies the child.' etc. The organic metaphor is

strong in child-centred approaches; 'Rather than curriculum, let us concern ourselves with the individual's sense of time, his rhythm and moods...It is important that the natural flow of activity, imagination, language and thought be uninterrupted by artificial breaks such as subject matter.' (Marsh quoted by Alexander 1984 : 17 & 18).

Bibliography

This thesis has been presented in accordance with the guidelines stipulated by The University of Warwick Graduate School 'Guide to Examinations for Higher Degrees by Research' September 1996.

Alexander, R.J. (1984) Primary Teaching London: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Ankersmit, F.R. & Mooij, J.J.A. (1993) *Knowledge and Language volume 111 : Metaphor and Knowledge* Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Avis, J. (1996) The Enemy Within: Quality and Managerialism in Education. In Avis, J. et. al. (eds) *Knowledge and Nationhood : Education, Politics and Work* London: Cassell.

Bailey, C. (1984) *Beyond the Present and the Particular* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bamborough, R. (1975) Comment: ideology and the modes of explanation. In Korner, S. (ed) *Explanation* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Barber, M. & Sebba, J. (1999) Reflections on Progress towards a World Class Education System. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 29, 2: 183-193.

Barhera, M.L. (1993) Metaphor in 19th-Century Medicine. In Ankersmit, F.R. & Mooij, J.J.A. op.cit.

Barrow, R. (1997) Language: Definition and Metaphor. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 16: 113-124.

Beck, J. (1998) Morality and Citizenship in Education London: Cassell.

____(1999) Makeover Or Takeover? The strange death of educational autonomy in neo-liberal England. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 20, 2: 223-238.

Bernstein, R. J. (1991) *The New Constellation* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Black, M. (1979) More about Metaphor. In Ortony, A. (ed) *Metaphor and Thought* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blenkin, G., Edwards, G. & Kelly, A.V. (1992) *Change and the Curriculum* London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Bonnett, M. (1994) *Children's Thinking* London: Cassell.

Bottery, M. P. (1988) Educational Management: an ethical critique. *Oxford Review of Education* 14, 3: 341-351.

____(1989) The Education of Business Management. *Oxford Review of Education* 15, 2: 129-146.

Brandom, R. (1997) Precis of *Making It Explicit. Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* vol. LVII, 1: 153-156.

Burge, T. (1989) Wherein is Language Social? In George, A. op.cit.

Carr, W. (1987) What is an Educational Practice? *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 21, 2: 163-175.

Caute, D. (1967) *Essential Writings of Karl Marx* London: MacGibbon & Key.

Collin, F. (1997) *Social Reality* London: Routledge.

Cooper, D. (1985) Metaphors We Live By. *Royal Institute of Philosophy* suppl. vol. 18: 43-58.

_____(1993) Truth and Metaphor. In Ankersmitt, F.R. & Mooij, J.J.A. op.cit.

Dadds, M. (1998) Some Politics of Pedagogy. Unpublished paper given at B.E.R.A. Annual Conference.

Dale, R. et. al. (1976) *Schooling and Capitalism* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Downie, R.S. (1990) Professions and Professionalism. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 24, 2: 147-159.

Dreyfus, H.L. & Rabinow, P. (1982) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Dummett, M. (1989) Language and Communication. In George, A. op.cit.

Duncan, G. (1987) Understanding Ideology. *Political Studies* XXXV: 649-659.

Eagleton, T. (1991) *Ideology: An Introduction* London: Verso.

Fielding, M. (1999a) Taking Education Really Seriously: two years of hard labour. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 29, 2: 173-181.

_____(1999b) Target Setting, Policy Pathology and Student Perspectives: learning to labour in new times. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 29, 2: 277-287.

Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge* London: Tavistock.

Freeden, M. (1996) *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gaita, R. (1990) Language and Conversation: Wittgenstein's Builders. *Royal Institute of Philosophy* suppl. vol. 28: 101-115.

George, A. (ed) (1989) *Reflections on Chomsky* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Geuss, R. (1981) *The Idea of a Critical Theory* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Godley, W. (1992) A Chancellor from another world. *The Guardian* 9th. October: 23.

Goodman, N. (1982) Notes on the Well-Made World. In Leinfellner, W., Kraemer, E. & Schank, J. (eds) *Language and Ontology* Wien: Holder- Pichler-Tempsky.

Grace, G. (1994) Education is a Public Good: On the need to Resist the Domination of Economic Science. In Bridges, D. & McLaughlin, T.H. (eds) *Education and the Market Place* London: Falmer Press.

Grice, P. (1989) *Studies in the Way of Words* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press

Gutting, G. (1989) *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Habermas, J. (1970) On Systematically Distorted Communication. *Inquiry* 13, 3: 205-218.

____(1988) *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hadreas, P. (1989) Money: A Speech Act Analysis. *Journal of Social Philosophy* 20, 3: 115-129.

Hamilton, M. B. (1987) The Elements of the Concept of Ideology. *Political Studies* XXXV: 18-38.

Hartley, D. (1997) The New Managerialism in Education: a mission impossible? *Cambridge Journal of Education* 27, 1: 47-57.

Henderson, P. (1976) Class Structure and the Concept of Intelligence. In Dale, R. et.al. op.cit.

Karier, C.J. (1976) Testing for Order and Control in the Corporate Liberal State. In Dale, R. et. al. op.cit.

Katz, L. (1993) What can we learn from Reggio-Emilia? In Edwards, G.,Gandini, L. & Forman, G. (eds) *The Hundred Languages of Children* Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex.

Kekes, J. (1980) *The Nature of Philosophy* Oxford: Blackwell.

Kolakowski, L. (1978) *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

____(1980) Why an Ideology is always Right. In Cranston, M. & Mair, P. *Ideology and Politics* European University Institute, Sijhoff: Alphen ann Denrijn.

Kretzmann, N. (1977) The Main Thesis of Locke's Semantic Theory. In Tipton, I.C. (ed) *Locke on Human Understanding* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Larrain, J. (1983) *Marxism and Ideology* London: MacMillan.

Locke, J. (1974) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* vol. 2 London: Dent.

Lovell, K. (1969) *Educational Psychology and Children* London: Unibooks.

Luntley, M. (1995) *Reason, Truth and Self* London: Routledge.

McDowell, J. (1997) Brandom on Representation and Inference. *Philosophy and Phenomenologigal Research* vol. LVII, 1: 157-162.

MacIntyre, A. (1973) The Essential Contestability of Some Social Concepts. *Ethics* 84: 1-9.

____(1985) *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* London: Duckworth.

McLean, D. (1995) *Ideology* Buckingham: Open University Press.

McMurty, J. (1991) Education and the Market Model. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 25, 2: 209-217.

Miller, G.A. (1969) Psychology: the Science of Mental Life London: Pelican.

Minogue, K. (1985) Alien Powers: the Pure Theory of Ideology. London: Widenfeld & Nicholson.

Moore, R. (1994) Professionalism, Expertise and Control in Teacher Training. In Wilkin, M. & Sankey, D. (eds) Collaboration and Transition in Initial Teacher Training. London: Kogan Page.

Mooij, J.J.A. (1993) Metaphor and Truth: A Liberal Approach. In Ankersmit, F.R. & Mooij, J.J.A. op.cit.

N.W.E.M.C. (1990) The Effective Middle Manager. Course run for Wirral L.E.A.

Oeklers, J. (1997) Is There *a* "Language of Education"? *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 16: 125-138.

Parekh, B. (1982) *Marx's Theory of Ideology* London: Croom Helm.

Pen, J. (1993) Economics and Language. In Ankersmitt, F.R. & Mooij, J.J.A. op.cit.

Pring, R. (1993) Is Teaching a Profession? Unpublished paper given at Philosophy of Education Annual Conference, New College, Oxford.

Rhees, R. (1970) 'Wittgenstein's Builders.' In Rhees, R. *Discussions of Wittgenstein* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Rorty, R. (1997) What Do You Do When They Call You a 'Relativist'? *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* vol. LVII, 1: 173-177.

Schatzki, T.R. (1996) *Social Practices* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scheffler, I. (1960) *The Language of Education* Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Taylor.

Searle, J. (1983) *Intentionality: an essay in the philosophy of mind* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

____(1995) *The Social Construction of Reality* London: Penguin Press.

Shotter, J. (1993a) *Conversational Realities* London: Sage Publications.

____(1993b) *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Skinner, Q. (1980) Language and Social Change. In Michaels, L. & Ricks, C. (eds) *The State of the Language* Berkley: University of California Press.

Squibb, P.G. (1977) Some notes towards the analysis of the social constructionof the "less able" or "backward" child. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 1, 3: 77-81.

Stevenson, L. (1974) *Seven Theories of Human Nature* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Taylor, C. (1985) *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers vol.1.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

____(1991) The Importance of Herder. In Margalit, E. (ed) *Isiah Berlin: A Celebration* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

____(1992) Heidegger, Language and Ecology. In Dreyfus, H. & Hall, H. *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* Oxford: Blackwell.

Taylor, T.J. (1990) Which is to be master? The institutionalization of authority in the science of language. In Joseph, J.E. & Taylor, T.J. (eds) *Ideologies of Language* London: Routledge.

Terman, L. & Merrill, M. (1944) *Measuring Intelligence* London: Harrap.

Thompson, J.B. (1990) *Ideology and Modern Culture* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Thompson, R. (1968) *The Pelican History of Psychology* London: Pelican.

Trigg, R. (1988) *Ideas of Human Nature: An Historical Introduction* Oxford: Blackwell.

Triggs, P. & Pollard, A. (1998) Pupil Experience and a Curriculum for Life-Long Learning. In Richards, C. & Taylor, P. H. (eds) *How Shall We School Our Children? Primary Education and Its Future* London: Falmer Press.

Wiggins, D. (1991) *Needs, Values, Truth* Oxford. Basil Blackwell.

Wilson, P.S. (1969) Child-centered education. *Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain Annual Conference.*

Wittgenstein, L. (1972) *Philosophical Investigations* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Yolton, J.W. (1977) *The Locke Reader* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.